

DATA ACT

(Mr. WELLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, the Internet and the new economy offers great opportunity. We have over 100 million Americans that are online. Every second, seven more Americans go online. There are now 4.8 million Americans employed in the technology sector. That is more than auto and steel and oil combined. So there is a tremendous amount of opportunity.

Unfortunately, when I talk with my educators, teachers, school administrators, and school board members back home, they tell me they notice a difference in the classroom when children have a computer and Internet access at home and those who do not. Many call that the digital divide.

I am pleased to say that the private sector has been stepping forward. Ford, Intel, Delta, American Airlines have stepped forward and are now offering to their employees, as an employee benefit, a computer and Internet access for use at home, benefitting 600,000 families. That is going to help.

Think about it. The laborer, the assembly line worker, the baggage handler, the flight attendant, their children having a computer and Internet access at home to do their schoolwork just like the CEO and the manager's child.

Here is the catch, though. The IRS wants to tax that computer provided to that employee. And, of course, we need to stop that. Let us pass the data act. I ask for cosponsorship and bipartisan support.

AMERICANS WANT REAL QUALITY HEALTH CARE

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the one thing that Americans are now crying out for is real quality health care, restore the relationship between patient and physician, and have this Congress pass a real Patient's Bill of Rights.

And then if we listen to their cry for the seniors, we have one needy senior, one needed prescription drug, and a cost of \$400 for one dose.

It is absolutely imperative when we begin to multiply the cost of \$400 times thousands and thousands of seniors that we provide the opportunity for equal access to lower price prescription drugs for our seniors, get a real importation bill to allow prescription drugs to come in so that seniors can be taken care of and, yes, have a real prescription drug benefit, a guaranteed Medicare benefit.

This is what the Democrats have been advocating. Why can our colleagues on the other side of the aisle

not join us to support our seniors to ensure, one, a real Patient's Bill of Rights and, two, real importation as it is in the agriculture conference on the Senate side to provide for lower-cost access to prescription drugs?

MEDIA DISPLAYS DOUBLE-STANDARD

(Mr. SMITH of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the double-standard that often exists in today's media coverage is obvious. For example, the major networks all provide the Democrats with more convention coverage than the Republicans. More coverage is also given to liberal positions.

Take the issue of gun control. Guns are consistently portrayed as the weapons of criminals. We never hear about a tragedy being averted or a life being saved because a law-abiding citizen was armed with a gun.

Media bias also censors ads. Both the New York Times and USA Today refused to run ads against partial-birth abortions.

This week AL GORE made up a story about what prescription drugs cost his mother-in-law, and the media all but ignored it.

Why does the media display such a liberal bias? Simply because journalists are more liberal than the rest of us.

A 1996 Roper Center survey found that 89 percent of Washington political writers voted for the Clinton/Gore ticket in 1992, only 9 percent supported George Bush.

PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES ARE AGAINST REIMPORTATION OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, seniors face skyrocketing prices for their prescription drugs. Many choose between purchasing their medications and buying groceries. We need a prescription drug benefit through Medicare. It is a necessity that would bring dignity to our seniors' lives and we need to do this.

In addition, the House needs to fight for lower prices. In July we passed an amendment to allow U.S. pharmacists to be able to purchase prescription drugs at the same low prices paid for in other countries, 20, 30, sometimes 50 percent less for the same drug, and then pass the savings along to seniors.

It is common sense. It will bring seniors relief from the crushing costs of prescription drugs. The pharmaceutical companies are waging an all-out campaign against reimportation. It is time we stood up for our seniors. It is time that the Republican leadership stop using empty rhetoric and protect our

seniors' right to affordable prescription drugs. We should allow reimportation of prescription drugs, and we should do it now.

TIME FOR CONGRESS TO ADMINISTER FIRST AID TO HOSPITALS

(Ms. GRANGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. GRANGER. Mr. Speaker, I stood behind the Balanced Budget Act when it was passed in 1997. We all believed it was a good bill that addressed fraud and abuse in Medicare billing. But now, 3 years down the road, we are seeing unintended consequences of this bill.

In 1997, Congress estimated the Balanced Budget Act would cut \$116 billion in fraudulent Medicare payments. Current projection, however, estimate \$227 billion in cuts. These cuts, almost double the original projection, go well beyond fraud and abuse. These cuts threaten vital hospital services.

Walls Regional Hospital in my district serves a growing but primarily rural area, Cleburne, Texas. The hospital recently expanded its Skilled Nursing section from 12 to 25 beds. Just as Walls finished their expansion, the Balanced Budget Act reduced the reimbursement rate for skilled nursing by 70 percent, a loss of a million dollars a year for Walls. Today, despite community needs, the Skilled Nursing facility is down to 11 beds.

It is stories like this that remind us to prioritize our Nation's health services. Mr. Speaker, it is time for Congress to administer first aid to our hospitals.

REIMPORTATION OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

(Mr. CROWLEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CROWLEY. Mr. Speaker, I have a constituent in Queens, New York, who pays \$409 for a 3-month supply of Prilosec for his wife. The same drug, the same dosage, same everything, would cost him \$184 in Canada. But it is illegal for him to purchase this medication in Canada and reimport it back into the U.S.

The only crime I see here is the high prices being charged by drug companies. They are truly gouging Americans.

Therefore, I am working with a number of my colleagues to allow individuals, pharmacists, and wholesalers to reimport prescription drugs back into the U.S. and pass the tremendous savings on to all Americans.

The GOP Congress will not pass a Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors Act.

The GOP Congress will not pass a prescription drug benefit under Medicare.

Well, now I challenge this Congress to allow for the safe reimportation of

FDA-approved drugs for Americans. It would lower drug costs by 50 percent overnight without costing the Government of this country one single dime.

Let me say this to America: The drug companies oppose this plan, this bill. Therefore, we all know it must be good for America.

WHY THIS LARGE CIGARETTE TAX?

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, let me pose a mathematical problem. When the President finally finishes his budget negotiations with the Congress, he will have spent the projected budget surplus and more.

Where will he go to find the money to finance his liberal spending programs? How about a big cigarette tax? That ought to make everyone happy.

In the North Carolina Senate, when we raised the tax, guess what happened. Tax incomes shrank, as it did in other States that raised the cigarette tax.

So I ask the President, why this large cigarette tax. It will not produce more income for anybody except the Feds because it will be a new item to them. The States will lose income; and the President's friends, the trial lawyers, probably could not collect their billion-dollar settlements.

So what is up, Mr. President? Mr. President, either you find extra money elsewhere or you really risk losing your best friends, the trial lawyers.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COOKSEY). Members are requested to address their remarks to the Chair.

SMALL BUSINESS COMPETITION PRESERVATION ACT OF 2000

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 582 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 582

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 4945) to amend the Small Business Act to strengthen existing protections for small business participation in the Federal procurement contracting process, and for other purposes. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. Points of order against consideration of the bill for failure to comply with clause 4(a) of rule XIII are waived. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Small Business. After general debate the bill shall be considered for

amendment under the five-minute rule. The bill shall be considered as read. During consideration of the bill for amendment, the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may accord priority in recognition on the basis of whether the Member offering an amendment has caused it to be printed in the portion of the Congressional Record designated for that purpose in clause 8 of rule XVIII. Amendments so printed shall be considered as read. The Chairman of the Committee of the Whole may: (1) postpone until a time during further consideration in the Committee of the Whole a request for a recorded vote on any amendment; and (2) reduce to five minutes the minimum time for electronic voting on any postponed question that follows another electronic vote without intervening business, provided that the minimum time for electronic voting on the first in any series of questions shall be 15 minutes. At the conclusion of consideration of the bill for amendment the Committee shall rise and report the bill to the House with such amendments as may have been adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill and amendments thereto to final passage without intervening motion except one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas (Mr. SESSIONS) is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. HALL), my colleague and my good friend, pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time is yielded for the purposes of debate only.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation before us today is an open rule providing for consideration of H.R. 4945, the Small Business Competition Preservation Act of 2000.

This open rule waives clause 4(a) of rule XIII against the consideration of the bill, which requires a 3-day availability of the committee report. The rule provides one hour of general debate to be equally divided among the chairman and the ranking minority member of the Committee on Small Business. The rule provides that the bill shall be open to amendment at any point.

The rule authorizes the Chair to accord priority in recognition to Members who have preprinted their amendments in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

The rule allows the Chairman of the Committee of the Whole to postpone votes during consideration of the bill and to reduce to 5 minutes on a postponed question if the vote follows a 15-minute vote.

Finally, the rule provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, it is often said that small business is the engine that drives the American economy. Statistics confirm this. Small businesses employ 53 percent of the private workforce and are responsible for 50 percent of the private gross domestic product.

I am proud of these facts. I am proud of small businesses and what their employees produce for America to keep us strong.

Small business is a literal powerhouse of job creation. They represent 99 percent of all employers and create 80 percent of the new jobs in America.

Small businesses are also more innovative than larger businesses. The airplane, audio tape recorder, heart valve, pacemaker, and the personal computer are among the important innovations by small firms in the 20th century.

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Looking ahead, we have got to make sure that small businesses have the needed resources and capital to move forward so that America and Americans have the best of what small businesses produce. Looking out for the family farm, ranch or store on Main Street is something this Congress strongly supports.

With this in mind, Republicans in Congress have focused on scheduling and passing legislation to further help and aid small businesses. For example, Congress passed legislation that would help small businesses better prepare for the millennium computer bug. We remember that as the Y2K bug. Congress also passed the Paperwork Elimination Act of 1999 to minimize burdens of Federal paperwork on small businesses by employing new technology such as digital signatures. Because small businesses are in dire need for more affordable health insurance, Congress passed legislation to allow small firms to band together to purchase insurance which lowers the cost. Small businesses also stood to benefit a great deal from legislation to repeal the death tax, legislation that was passed by Congress but vetoed by President Clinton. Had this legislation been signed into law, many small businesses would be able to stay in the family when the owner dies rather than being sold to pay a debt to the IRS.

Mr. Speaker, with passage of this rule, Congress will once again consider important legislation to help small business. The underlying legislation, the Small Business Competition Preservation Act of 2000, is important to strengthen existing protections for small business participating in the Federal procurement contracting process. The Federal Government has failed in its goal to spend at least 20 percent of their procurement dollars with small businesses, in part because of the Federal agencies' practice of bundling individual contracts into packages that are too large for small businesses to handle. Federal agencies contend that contract bundling saves taxpayers money while improving the quality of products and the services provided by the government. However, none of this has been substantiated.

The database, analyses, and reporting requirements in H.R. 4945 will ensure that adequate data exists concerning the benefits of contract bundling, thus allowing Congress to make better decisions and to better assess the small business and the needs that they have. Bundling is one of the most