

I urge my colleagues to strike these unjust provisions and let Native Americans know what happened to their money.

INTRODUCTION OF THE MEDICARE MARKET ACQUISITION DRUG PRICE

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2002

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce the Medicare Market Acquisition Drug Price Act of 2002. This bill would correct a long-standing and well-documented problem with the way Medicare pays for the few outpatient prescription drugs it covers today. This bill would save taxpayers billions of dollars, without compromising Medicare beneficiaries' access to cancer treatment or other services. Congress should enact this bill immediately.

This problem must be resolved—this year—whether or not we succeed in creating a new Medicare prescription drug benefit. Due to pharmaceutical industry efforts, this problem was not addressed in the prescription drug legislation recently introduced and passed by the House Republican leadership. Despite their neglect of the issue, I believe there is bipartisan consensus that Medicare should not continue to pay exorbitant prices for prescription drugs. I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill.

Medicare currently pays for only a limited number of outpatient drugs, generally ones that a patient cannot self-administer, such as chemotherapy drugs. Medicare spends over \$5 billion every year on these drugs. Under current rules, Medicare vastly over-pays for these drugs, because it bases payments on the artificially high “average wholesale price” (AWP) reported by the drug's manufacturer—regardless of the actual price a provider pays for the drug. There is abundant evidence that drug manufacturers have boosted their own drug sales and increased their profits, at great taxpayer expense, by manipulating the AWP of their drugs. Simply put, drug manufacturers report inflated prices, sell providers the drugs for much less, and then encourage providers to bill Medicare for the maximum allowable amount—95 percent of the inflated AWP reported by the manufacturer.

This bill offers a straightforward solution to this problem. It would require Medicare payments to be based on the actual market prices at which manufacturers sell their drugs. This price, called the average acquisition price, would be verifiable. The Secretary would have the authority to audit drug companies' reports. Drug companies would be subject to steep fines for deliberately filing false or incomplete information.

Mr. Speaker, the current Medicare AWP rules are a sham and must be changed. Consider the following:

The General Accounting Office has described the AWP as “neither ‘average’ nor ‘wholesale;’ it is simply a number assigned by the product's manufacturer.” The GAO found that Medicare's payments for physician-administered outpatient drugs were at least \$532 million higher than providers' potential acquisition costs in 2000. Similarly, the GAO found that Medicare paid at least \$483 million more

for supplier-billed drugs than suppliers' potential acquisition costs in 2000. Some drugs were available at prices averaging just 15 percent of the manufacturer's reported AWP, while Medicare continued to pay 95 percent of AWP.

The Office of the Inspector General at the Department of Health and Human Services found that Medicare could save \$761 million per year by paying the actual wholesale prices available to physicians and suppliers for just 24 of the outpatient drugs currently covered by Medicare.

Numerous states, consumer groups, and private health plans have sued drug manufacturers for fraudulently inflating Medicare drug prices.

These suits follow on the heels of a record Medicare and Medicaid fraud settlement by TAP Pharmaceutical Products. In October 2001, TAP pleaded guilty to a charge of conspiracy to violate federal law. TAP agreed to pay \$875 million—the largest criminal fine ever levied by the government for health care fraud—to settle the suit, in which the government alleged the company artificially inflated the AWP of the company's prostate cancer drug Lupron.

Drug manufacturers have resisted efforts to investigate this problem. For example, last summer the GAO continued its investigation into AWP on Congress' behalf and requested drug price information from many manufacturers. One pharmaceutical company, Pfizer, refused to comply with GAO's request until this January, when GAO subpoenaed the company's CEO, Henry McKinnell.

Mr. Speaker, the problem is well known. The solution is straightforward. Both the GAO and the OIG have recommended that we revise Medicare's drug payment policies to reflect actual market prices, accounting for rebates and other discounts available from manufacturers. That is exactly what this bill does.

Manufacturers would be required to report the actual average market acquisition prices for their drugs as a condition for Medicare coverage of those drugs. Each manufacturer would have to certify the accuracy of its reports and the Secretary of HHS would be empowered to audit price information to verify the accuracy of the reports. Drug manufacturers would be subject to unlimited civil monetary penalties for filing false reports and would be subject to a penalty of \$100,000 for each day they fail to provide timely information.

The bill is also carefully crafted to ensure that the reimbursement revisions will not adversely impact Medicare beneficiaries' access to care. First, to ensure these drugs are available in areas of the country where providers must purchase covered drugs at prices above the average, the actual reimbursement level to providers would be set 5 percent above the average acquisition price. Second, Medicare would pay dispensing fees to reflect differences in the costs of dispensing different drugs and biologics. Third, the bill would ensure continued access to cancer treatment. Oncologists have argued that inflated AWP reimbursements are necessary to compensate for the administration of cancer medicines. This bill would correct this anomaly by revising Medicare payments for oncology services to appropriately account for these indirect costs, in accordance with GAO recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that Congress will act to provide a meaningful Medicare pre-

scription drug benefit this year. On top of the many other serious concerns I have with the drug benefit passed by the Republican leadership, I am deeply disappointed that it did not address the abuses of the current AWP system. We must not shirk our responsibility to ensure that Medicare properly pays for the limited outpatient prescription drugs it already covers. There is no need for taxpayers to continue to fill pharmaceutical companies' coffers with the ill-gotten gains of the current AWP system. I hope all of my colleagues will join me in passing this important legislation.

HONORING HISPANIC CITIZENS—
9TH DISTRICT OF TEXAS

HON. NICK LAMPSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2002

Mr. LAMPSON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor local Hispanic citizens from the 9th District of Texas who were chosen for their work in the community. While the dedication of Hispanic leaders is well-known throughout the United States, local citizens, right here in the Southeast Gulf Coast region, are just as important to ensuring equal rights and economic progress for all Texans.

Last month I asked members of the communities in the 9th District to nominate individuals for my “Henry B. Gonzalez Latino Leadership Award,” named in honor of the late Congressman Henry B. Gonzalez, that gives special recognition to those who have worked selflessly, often without recognition, and made contributions both in the Hispanic community and the broader society as well. Recipients were chosen because they embodied a giving and sharing spirit, and had made a contribution to our nation.

While their efforts may not make the headlines every day, their service and dedication to our country is nevertheless vital to our entire region. This region of Southeast Texas is not successful in spite of our diversity; we are successful because of it.

Please join me in recognizing and congratulating these leaders for their work and commitment to their communities and to Southeast Texas. It is leaders like these men and women that continue to be a source of pride for Texas. The winners of this year's Henry B. Gonzalez Latino Leadership Award” are:

Alice Flores, Elias de la Cerdá, Jr., Ruben F. DeHoyos, John J. DeLeon, Joe Escobedo, Jr., Ella Flores, Roberto C. Flores, Robert D. Gallegos, Tina Garcia, Manuel Guajardo, Manuel R. Gonzalez, Elida Saenz Matthews, Eugenia Rios, Elisa Vasquez, Gilbert Zamora, Jr., Manuel Urbina II, Gilbert Hinojosa, Joseph Cantu, Gregory Flores, Carlos Hernandez, and Jesus Abrego.

Mr. Speaker, the recipients of the “Henry B. Gonzalez” award are dedicated and hard-working individuals who have done so much for their neighbors and for this nation as a whole. Today, I stand to recognize their spirit and to say that I am honored to be their Representative.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC TRANSIT

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2002

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to submit a statement made by Mrs. Faye Thompson of Wayne County, West Virginia before the U.S. Senate Committee on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs, Subcommittee on Housing and Transportation, on the importance of public transit. Mrs. Thompson is a member of the Wayne County, West Virginia Community Service Organization, Inc. Board of Directors.

Public transit is a vital transportation link for people in rural areas, who do not own their own cars, or cannot find someone to drive them to medical appointments, etc.

In her testimony, Mrs. Thompson told how she went to work as a social worker for the Department of Health and Human Services after her three sons became old enough to go to school. Mrs. Thompson worked with low-income families and said that "one of the biggest obstacles of obtaining services was the lack of transportation." During those years, Wayne County had no public transportation.

At the time, Mrs. Thompson had her own car, and was able to drive anywhere she wanted to go, at any time.

Later in life, Mrs. Thompson's husband passed away. Then she was told she needed to have both knees replaced. Her two older sons live out of state, and her youngest son worked full-time, and was unable to drive her to physical therapy sessions.

Suddenly, Mrs. Thompson realized she was no longer independent and that she was now one of the people who need public transportation. But unlike the earlier years, when she worked to help low-income families who had no access to public transportation, Wayne County now offered public transportation.

As Mrs. Thompson said, "Thanks to public transportation, I was able to obtain the medical services that I needed."

Mrs. Thompson was able to look at how tough it was, years ago, for low-income families in Wayne County to be without public transit, and look at how much easier it was for her, while in rehabilitation, to receive physical therapy because she could rely on public transit.

Mrs. Thompson noted that "Wayne X-Press Public Transit System in Wayne, West Virginia provides transportation services to people for medical appointments, to jobs, job interviews, job training, social activities, senior citizen centers, Adult Day treatment programs, general education training, parenting classes, etc."

She described public transit as "the lifeline for the public."

As a Member of Congress representing the Third Congressional District of West Virginia, I have been working to help low-income, rural West Virginians to enhance their quality of life by providing transportation to medical care, educational facilities and jobs.

Public transit helps to create and build jobs, which is a boost to the economy. We must maintain and expand public transit programs. When we reauthorize the surface transportation legislation in the 108th Congress, I will

work to continue to strengthen and expand public transit programs, to ensure "the lifeline for the public" continues.

FORT GAY, WEST VIRGINIA

July 16, 2002

UNITED STATES SENATE,
Banking, Housing, and Urban Development, Subcommittee on Housing and Transportation, Washington, DC.

MR. CHAIRMAN AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS: It is an honor to be with you here today to talk about something that is dear to my heart. First, let me tell you something about myself. My late husband and I raised three sons, and that was an experience in itself. After my children got into school, my husband who was employed by the Norfolk and Western Railroad went to work and I started back to school to become an elementary school teacher in a one room schoolhouse in rural Appalachia, West Virginia.

I saw the many challenges of the rural Appalachian people, so I changed careers and became a Social Worker for the Department of Health and Human Resources in rural West Virginia. Throughout my career, I worked with low income families and one of the biggest obstacles of obtaining services was the lack of transportation. At that time there was no public transportation in Wayne County. Throughout my twenty-two years in my career there was always a need for individuals to access, services. Throughout my life I have been a very independent person as you can see, raising a family, starting not just one career but two in my life, and having the privilege of having my own transportation. Most of us take for granted picking up our car keys, going out of the house, and going anywhere we want to go.

Even though I have always recognized the need for rural transportation. I never thought that it would be something that I would need. After my husband passed away, I lived alone in my home. I then downsized to an apartment. I was still able to go to my homemaker meetings, church activities, Board Member meetings, volunteer work, and continued to meet my friends for lunch and social activities. My physician informed me that I was going to have to have both of my knees replaced. He stated that after my surgery and rehabilitation that I would need to go to physical therapy three times a week for several weeks. My two eldest sons both live out of state and my youngest son works full-time, therefore was unable to take me to my therapy sessions. I then realized that I was one of the people who needed transportation. I was no longer independent and this was quite a shock to me. Thanks to Public Transportation I was able to obtain the medical services that I needed.

Being a member of Wayne County Community Service Organization, Inc. Board of Directors, I can sit here today in front of you and let you know how important the Public Transit System is to the people. How it enables them to access needed services. Wayne X-Press Public Transit System in Wayne, West Virginia provides transportation services to people for medical appointments, to jobs, job interviews, job training, social activities, senior citizen centers, Adult Day treatment programs, general education training, parenting classes, etc. I'm here today to ask you distinguished ladies and gentlemen to continue funding for Public Transit Systems. Why, because it is the lifeline for the public. So I invite all of you to Wayne County, West Virginia to "hop aboard" the Wayne X-Press.

FAYE THOMPSON

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2003

SPEECH OF

HON. MAXINE WATERS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 17, 2002

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1854) making appropriations for the legislative branch for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purposes:

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Chairman, I rise to support the Capps amendment to prohibit the use of funds for new oil drilling on 36 leases off the coast of California.

Oil spills would devastate the sensitive marine environment of California's coast. The Santa Barbara oil spill in 1969 dumped over four million gallons of oil into the sea, killed thousands of animals, blackened beaches and decimated the local marine environment. The coast took years to recover.

California's economy depends upon the health of its coasts. Tourism brings in nearly \$30 billion a year to our state, and the fishing industry is also important to our economy. California cannot afford the risks of offshore oil drilling.

The people of California are strongly opposed to offshore oil drilling. Leases off the coasts of Florida, Alaska and North Carolina have already been terminated. It is time to terminate the California leases as well and respect the will of California's people.

I urge my colleagues to support the Capps amendment.

ARGENTINA MUST TAKE ACTION AGAINST TERRORISTS WHO CARRIED OUT THE 1994 AMIA BOMBING

TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 18, 2002

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, eight years ago today—on July 18, 1994, a car bomb exploded at the AMIA Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina, leaving eighty-five people dead and leveling the building. Now, eight years later, the trial of a handful of suspected accessories to the crime has only barely begun, and the masterminds behind the horrific attack are still unidentified and at-large.

While we recognize that Argentina is currently struggling with serious political and economic crises, the government of President Duhalde must remain focused on the investigation of the AMIA bombing and the trial of the accused. The resolution of this case is critical to demonstrate that Argentine society fully embraces the rule of law and is moving toward the fulfillment of justice. The AMIA case presents Argentina with the opportunity to send a message to the world that terrorism does not pay and that known terrorists will be prosecuted.

Mr. Speaker, the trial has been long in coming and has faced many obstacles, some of which Fernando de la Rua and current President Eduardo Duhalde have addressed. There