

moves overseas to avoid their patriotic obligation to pay taxes is, I believe, akin to treason.

THANKING WORLD WAR II VETERANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, as we prepare to celebrate Memorial Day, I would ask that we pause and reflect on what some have called our greatest generation. Over 16 million Americans answered the call, and now we are losing over 1,000 World War II vets every day. We owe all our vets.

Perhaps one of the greatest tributes was offered by President Ronald Reagan when he went to Normandy to observe the 50th Anniversary of that amazing invasion. He said, "Those men of Normandy were men of great faith. They had faith that they fought for all humanity. They had faith that they fought for a just cause. They had faith in a loving God that would grant them His tender mercy on this beachhead, or the next. They somehow knew that word of the invasion was spreading through the darkness back home. That in Georgia, they were filling the churches at 4 a.m. That in Kansas, they were kneeling and praying on their porches. And in Philadelphia, they were ringing the Liberty Bell."

To all our vets, and especially the World War II vets, let us say a special thanks to them this Memorial Day.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to stress again, as I have many times over the last 2 weeks, the fact that the Republican leadership has not brought up any type of prescription drug benefit. Two or 3 weeks ago we saw members of the Republican leadership in both the committees and various leadership positions say they were going to bring up a prescription drug benefit for seniors. They committed to the fact that that would be in committee last week. It would be reported out to the floor of the House, and would be voted on the floor this week before the Memorial Day recess. All of a sudden we hear nothing about it, no mention of trying to bring any action in committee, no specifics about what they might bring up, certainly no effort to bring anything to the floor.

I have said over and over again, this is the biggest crisis facing the American people, particularly seniors. I have seniors every day that call me up and say they cannot afford prescription

drugs. What we need to do and what the Democrats have been saying over and over again is that we should simply provide a prescription drug benefit under Medicare so that every senior has a guaranteed benefit, and in the same way they have their hospital bills paid for by Medicare, or doctor bills paid for by Medicare Part B, there should be a new Part C or D under Medicare where they pay a very low premium, a very low deductible per month, and the Federal Government pays at least 80 percent of the cost of their prescription drug bills.

We need to bring the cost of prescription drugs down. Seniors and people in general, Americans in general, cannot afford prescription drugs because of the increased costs. We have had double-digit inflation with regard to drug prices for the last 6 years. The Republicans refuse to provide a Medicare prescription drug benefit for seniors, and refuse to address the issue of cost. If we had all seniors under a Medicare program, as the Democrats have proposed, 40 million seniors, the Secretary of Health and Human Services would be able to negotiate reduced prices for prescription drugs because the government would have the negotiating power of all of the seniors in the United States, 40 million strong.

We must address the issue of cost and provide a Medicare benefit that includes prescription drugs. I do not understand why my colleagues continue to drag on the issue. Some of the talk is maybe they will provide a low-income benefit for just the poorest seniors, under 10 percent of the seniors. Other times we hear about their proposals to privatize, in other words, take some money and throw it to insurance companies and hope that they will provide some sort of drug-only policy for those seniors who might be able to find an insurance company that will sell them such a policy.

But these ideas on the Republican side about throwing some money to insurance companies, trying to help those with low income, they do not get to the real problem and the real solution, and that is a nationwide Medicare prescription drug benefit that every senior has and every senior is guaranteed. We have seen now for 30 years how effective the Medicare program is in terms of taking care of hospital bills and taking care of doctors' bills.

Mr. Speaker, why not just expand the program to include prescription drugs. It is a program that works. This is not an ideological problem. We are not trying to figure out who is on the right or left, who is a Democrat or Republican. We want to do something that is practical, that is meaningful for the average American, particularly for the average American senior.

The Democrats are going to be up here every day and every night asking the Republicans to bring up a prescription drug benefit, to have a debate and do something about this between now and the end of this session. The number

of days that we are going to be here gets shorter and shorter. If this is not brought up soon, certainly after the Memorial Day recess, it is very unlikely that we will see action on it before the end of the session. Bring up a prescription drug benefit, put it under Medicare, make sure that it applies to all seniors and we have a cost mechanism to reduce cost. Anything less than that is not fair to America's seniors.

NEW YORK DONATES WORLD TRADE CENTER STEEL TO SACRED HEART CATHOLIC CHURCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentlewoman from New Mexico (Mrs. WILSON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, this is a very special day. Something special is happening in New York City this morning. There is a small church in Baretas in the old part of Albuquerque, New Mexico called Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church. In the 1970s, they had to tear down their church because it was structurally unsound. It had two bell towers. They rebuilt the church across the street, but the bells were lost until recently, and they found one of the huge bells and they are now going to rebuild the bell tower.

Some leaders in the community contacted me and the Archbishop and wrote to the mayor of the City of New York and asked for two beams from the World Trade Center to incorporate into the design of the new bell tower. Some people from New Mexico, including Father Moore and John Garcia and Sosimo Padilla and a member of my staff, are in New York this morning at ground zero picking up those two beams that were given to us by the City of New York.

Those bells at the Baretas bell tower rang when World War II ended. They rang for weddings and funerals. They rang every Sunday morning over the City of Albuquerque to call people to worship. We are pleased in Albuquerque and thankful to the people of New York that the bell towers will be rebuilt and the bells will ring again. They will ring in remembrance, and they will ring in the call to worship.

Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church in Albuquerque is a beautiful church where about 800 people meet to worship. The Church, including twin bell towers, was razed in the mid-1970s because of structural problems, and its two bronze bells disappeared. One bell was found recently in a back yard, the other remains missing. The Church has been rebuilt and plans to build a new bell tower. This need and an inspired idea were the beginning of a wonderful journey that has brought together the people of New Mexico and the citizens of New York.

The bells in Baretas rang when the war ended. They rang for weddings and for funerals. They rang to call people to prayer. Now they will ring again in remembrance.

New Mexico Archbishop Michael Sheehan and I wrote to New York Mayor Bloomberg in January about the community's hopes to use steel from the World Trade Center to rebuild a bell tower for the Church. The Barelás Community Development Center spearheaded this effort to revitalize the neighborhood with this landmark as the center of the community.

New York City has agreed to donate two 20-foot steel beams from the World Trade Center for a Bell Tower at the Sacred Heart Church. The beams will be incorporated into the design of the tower and memorialize victims of the September 11 terrorist attacks.

Many people deserve a lot of credit for making this a reality. John Garcia and Sosimo Padilla thought they could make this happen, and they sought assistance from me and others. And they did it.

We saw the face of evil on September 11th. And in the aftermath, we saw the depth of America's goodness and a return to simple faith. New Mexico will rebuild this bell tower and remember. We are a strong, loving people and a faithful people. This bell tower will remind us and call us to worship for many years to come.

After the attacks on September 11, President Bush said that terrorism cannot dent the steel of American resolve. I agree. These beams, this parish, this community, represent the strength of our American character and all the best our Nation has to offer. I'm honored to be a part of this.

Today, a delegation of New Mexicans are in New York to accept the beams in a ceremony. Traveling to New York are John Garcia; the Rev. James Moore of the Sacred Heart Church; Sosimo Padilla, head of the church's bell committee; Sam Tinker, a local business owner who volunteered to transport the steel, and a representative from my staff, Dawn Petchell, who assisted in this request.

I also want to thank Southwest Airlines who donated airfare for the New Mexico delegation to go to New York, and to Bob Turner's Ford Country who donated a large flag to drape over the steel beams as they travel to the State. The Albuquerque Hispano Chamber of Commerce is planning a celebration to welcome the steel beams to New Mexico.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. RODRIGUEZ. Mr. Speaker, it is shameful that our seniors are still without a workable prescription drug benefit program. Because of the rapid increase in the price of prescription drugs, and the costs related to medical care, the price of medicine is now out of reach of millions of seniors. Tragically, many of our seniors are now faced with a choice between food and prescription drugs.

I go home, and every weekend people continue to reach out and tell me they have a problem with buying their prescriptions. I had a lady come to me and say I have to buy the prescription for my husband, and I choose not to buy for myself. We continue to hear that day in and day out. It is shameful that we have not taken a position on this.

As Democrats, we support a prescription drug benefit plan that covers all seniors that is voluntary and universal. No senior would be faced with a prospect of not being able to afford medicine regardless of income. We understand back in the 1960s when we established Medicare that if Lyndon B. Johnson had known that prescriptions were needed at that time, and now we know that they are needed for care, they would have been included in the Medicare process.

We also know that the insurance companies, even back then, the reason why we have Medicare is because the insurance companies, as soon as the elderly were getting sick, they were being dumped. As soon as they were not making a profit on the senior citizens, they were being let go. We know now that the proposal that the Republicans have, and that is to try to provide an additional insurance to our seniors who have a fixed income who cannot afford additional insurance, who the insurance companies do not want because if they get sick, they are going to be dumped again, very similar to what the HMOs are doing now in those situations where they are not making a profit.

We looked at Medicare, and we know that we tried to bring down the cost and we established HMOs so that we would bring down the cost, but we know now that the HMO has actually cost us more than Medicare services. We need to stop playing around and respond to this serious issue before us, and that is meeting the needs of our seniors and the prescription drugs that they need.

We also recognize that those same prescriptions, and this is a crime, those same prescriptions are sold outside this country for cheaper prices, and our seniors who can least pay for them are the ones that are having to carry the burden. This is where the profits are being made from the pharmaceutical companies. It should be a crime for this to be occurring.

Mr. Speaker, we need to pass a meaningful prescription drug plan that uses Medicare to make drugs affordable and provide universal voluntary benefits for all seniors. Congress can vote to bail out Enron, and they can also vote to help the most wealthy of this country by providing them tax cuts, but we do not take care of our elderly, and that is shameful. While the Republican proposals claim to help seniors, it does not cover all seniors, and it provides no real guarantees for coverage.

The much more narrowly constructed House Republican plan would not reach many middle class Americans. Less than 6 percent would be covered. The reality is when you get sick and are in need, those private companies are not going to be there for us. They are not going to be there for our seniors. We need to make sure that Medicare provides this service. We need to make sure that we treat our seniors in an appropriate manner when they reach their twilight years.

Also, the Republican plan forces seniors to shop and buy a private insurance plan, making it a hassle for older Americans who will have to contend with insurance plans which come and go. As I have indicated, even the insurance companies are going to be trying to get those more healthy seniors out there so they can make a profit. We know most of our seniors, when they get ill, are going to need not 1, not 2, but some cases up to 8 to 10 prescriptions. Insurance companies are not going to want to cover those. The administration knows that, and we need to recognize that and be able to do the right thing when it comes to our seniors and treat them in a manner of dignity as we should.

In addition, the Republican plan does not address the rising cost of prescription drugs. We have talked about those costs. The pharmaceutical companies, it angers me because we know they are selling that same prescription in Canada and Europe for much less than what it is sold for to our seniors here. We ask and plead that we pass a prescription drug plan that benefits all.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12 of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until 10 a.m. today.

Accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 20 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until 10 a.m.

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AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order at 10 a.m.

PRAYER

Pastor Ken Wilde, Capital Christian Center, Meridian, Idaho, offered the following prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father:

Today we rise with humility and thankfulness before our Creator and ask for divine assistance from Heaven. We are of all people grateful for the bountiful blessings that You have bestowed upon our great land. As this body of legislators now begins its day of deliberations, we ask that You send to them a supernatural ability to discern heaven-sent solutions; that there would come such divine breakthroughs in areas of legislative logjams that we all would say with one voice, the Lord God Almighty, He has helped us.

We pray that You would extend Your hand of health, strength, endurance, and grace to each Representative and their family members. As these men and women help steward our Nation we ask, as Jesus Christ asked, Your kingdom come, Your will be done in their earthly endeavors today. Give us all now a vision and a hope and a faith to lead this Nation into the divine destiny that You have ordained that America