

sponsors, the drug industry's ugly habit of charging American consumers the highest prices in the world for drugs our tax dollars, our research, our NIH helped produce.

I recently received a letter from a constituent who last year took a bus and purchased his medicines in Canada. He said the only side effect from those drugs was that he saved \$2,000. Same medicines, same quality, \$2,000 less. The savings is significantly more than most seniors would save by signing up for the Republican prescription drug plan.

The second goal of my Republican colleagues is not to rock the boat when it comes to drug industry pricing. Never upset the prescription drug company, one of their biggest contributors.

The third goal is to privatize Medicare. The Republican prescription drug plan not only bypasses Medicare by promoting private prescription drug plans, it would phase out Medicare as an entitlement and phase in a privatized, defined contribution program. Medicare beneficiaries would receive a voucher to cover part of the cost of the private insurance. Wealthier citizens would supplement that voucher to get better coverage. Lower income seniors will just have to take what they get.

If the majority want to end the Medicare entitlement and abandon the principles that all Medicare beneficiaries, everyone in this country over the age of 65, are entitled to good health care coverage, they should not hide behind prescription drug coverage to do that. They should say, yes, we want to privatize Medicare.

I am working with other interested Members on legislation that adds a real prescription drug benefit to Medicare, that harnesses the collective purchasing power of Medicare beneficiaries to drive drug prices down, which is what other countries, especially Canada, do to get lower drug prices and that does not use prescription drug coverage as their method to privatize Medicare.

We are the richest country in the world. We owe our prosperity to the retirees who built this country. If we can afford trillion dollar tax cuts, which my friend, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS), will talk about in a moment, if we can afford trillion dollar tax cuts that go overwhelmingly to the richest people in this country, we sure can afford a real drug benefit for our seniors.

Let us not trivialize the concerns of Medicare beneficiaries and every American by sugarcoating paltry coverage plans. The American public hired us to address their concerns, not to co-opt them. Let us, for a change in this body, do our job.

TAX LIMITATION AMENDMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 23, 2002, the gen-

tleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I was not going to comment on the speech of the previous speaker, but since he mentioned my name, I will say that the plan that he is proposing is basically a new government program operating out of HCFA, which is the government body that administers this program for prescription drugs. What Republicans want to do is provide a drug program like we, as Members of Congress and the Senate and the President, have. It is patterned after the Federal Employee Health Benefit program, which is a private program. So the whole gist of what he is saying comes down to a new government agency versus a program similar to the one Members of Congress have. I really think the people of America, our constituents, would like to have the same health care I have, the same prescription drug program I have, and not a new government program.

Mr. Speaker, as the gentleman mentioned, I am here to talk about the Permanent Death Tax Repeal Act this body passed. Actually, Mr. Speaker, we have passed 22 tax cuts bills for the 107th Congress. Now some of these tax cuts were not passed by the Senate, were not signed by the President, but we passed all of these in the House, for example, foster care. We had a tax credit for foster care. We had an adoption tax credit. We had a tax credit in the energy bill. We had a tax credit for victims of terrorism. We had a tax cut for pension plans. The Marriage Penalty Relief Tax Acceleration Act was passed on May 21 of this year. We had an adoption tax credit and we had Holocaust victims tax credits.

Mr. Speaker, all of these 22 tax cut bills passed by the House are as follows:

22 TAX CUT BILLS PASS THE HOUSE—107TH CONGRESS, 2001-2002

March 8, 2001—Across-the-Board Income Tax Relief: H.R. 3, the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Act of 2001, by Rep. Bill Thomas; passage vote 230-198 (Republicans 219-0, Democrats 10-197).

March 29, 2001—Marriage Penalty Tax Relief: H.R. 6, the Marriage Penalty and Family Tax Relief Act of 2001, by Rep. Jerry Weller; passage vote 282-144 (Republicans 217-0, Democrats 64-143).

April 4, 2001—Death Tax Repeal: H.R. 8, the Death Tax Elimination Act of 2001, by Rep. Jennifer Dunn; passage vote 274-154 (Republicans 215-3, Democrats 58-150).

May 2, 2001—Retirement Savings and Pension Reform: H.R. 10, the Comprehensive Retirement Security and Pension Reform Act of 2001, by Rep. Rob Portman; passage vote 407-24 (Republicans 219-1, Democrats 187-22).

May 15, 2001—Foster Care: H.R. 586, the Fairness for Foster Care Families Act of 2001, by Rep. Ron Lewis; passage vote under suspension 420-0 (Republicans 215-0, Democrats 203-0).

May 16, 2001—Across-the-Board Income Tax Relief: 1836, the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001, by Rep. Bill Thomas; passage vote 230-197 (Republicans 216-0, Democrats 13-196).

May 17, 2001—Adoption Tax Credit: H.R. 622, the Hope for Children Act, by Rep. Jim

DeMint; passage vote 420-0 (Republicans 213-0, Democrats 205-0).

May 26, 2001—Bush Tax Cut (Signed into law by President Bush): Conference Report on H.R. 1836, the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001, by Rep. Bill Thomas; passage vote 240-154 (Republicans 211-0, Democrats 28-153).

July 19, 2001—Tax Provisions in Faith-Based Initiative: H.R. 7, the Community Solutions Act of 2001, by Rep. J.C. Watts; passage vote 233-198 (Republicans 217-4, Democrats 15-193).

August 2, 2001—Tax Provisions in Energy Bill: H.R. 4, the SAFE Act of 2001, by Rep. Billy Tauzin; passage vote 240-189 (Republicans 203-16, Democrats 36-172).

August 2, 2001—Tax Provisions in Patients' Bill of Rights: An amendment to H.R. 2563, the Bipartisan Patient Protection Act, by Rep. Bill Thomas; passage vote 236-194 (Republicans 217-2, Democrats 18-191).

September 13, 2001—Terrorist Victims Tax Relief Bill (Signed into law by President Bush): H.R. 2884, the Victims of Terrorism Relief Act of 2001, by Rep. Bill Thomas; passage vote 418-0, (Republicans 214-0, Democrats 202-0).

October 24, 2001—Economic Stimulus Package: H.R. 3090, the Economic Security and Recovery Act of 2001, by Rep. Bill Thomas; passage vote 216-214 (Republicans 212-7, Democrats 3-206).

December 20, 2001—Economic Stimulus Package: H.R. 3529, the Economic Security and Worker Assistance Act of 2001, by Rep. Bill Thomas; passage vote 244-193 (Republicans 214-2, Democrats 9-190).

February 14, 2002—Economic Stimulus Package: An amendment to the Senate amendment to H.R. 622, renamed the Economic Security and Workers Assistance Act of 2002, by Rep. Bill Thomas; passage vote 225-199 (Republicans 214-1, Democrats 10-197).

March 7, 2002—Tax Provisions in Unemployment Benefits and Jobs Bill (Signed into law by President Bush): An amendment to the Senate Amendment of H.R. 3090, renamed the Job Creation and Worker Assistance Act of 2002, by Rep. Bill Thomas; passage vote 417-3 (Republicans 218-0, Democrats 197-3).

April 11, 2002—Tax Provision in Pension Reform Bill: H.R. 3762, the Pension Security Act of 2002, by Rep. John Boehner; passage vote 255-163 (Republicans 208-2, Democrats 46-160).

April 18, 2002—Make Permanent the Bush Tax Cut: An amendment to the Senate amendment on H.R. 586, renamed the Tax Relief Guarantee Act of 2002, by Rep. Bill Thomas; passage vote 229-198 (Republicans 219-1, Democrats 9-196).

May 21, 2002—Acceleration of Marriage Penalty Relief and new WOTC Reforms: H.R. 4626, the Encouraging Work and Supporting Marriage Act of 2002, by Rep. Amo Houghton; passage vote 409-1 (Republicans 211-0, Democrats 196-1).

June 4, 2002—Make Permanent the Expanded Adoption Tax Credit: H.R. 4800, to repeal the sunset of the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001, with respect to the expansion of the adoption credit and adoption assistance programs, by Rep. Dave Camp; passage vote 391-1 (Republicans 204-0, Democrats 185-1).

June 4, 2002—Make Permanent the Holocaust Victims Tax Benefit: H.R. 4823, the Holocaust Restitution Tax Fairness Act of 2002, by Rep. Clay Shaw; passage vote 392-1 (Republicans 205-0, Democrats 186-1).

June 6, 2002—Make Permanent the Death Tax Repeal: H.R. 2143, the Permanent Death Tax Repeal Act of 2001, by Rep. Dave Weldon; vote not held yet.

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Mr. Speaker, there is no greater defining principle of our party than letting taxpayers keep what they earn.

Time and time again we have shown tax relief is good policy and good politics. As we debate these bills, we have the opportunity to reflect on our Nation's Byzantine tax code and the problem it imposes on the American taxpayers.

This week, Mr. Speaker, we will be considering important and meaningful legislation to address a shortcoming in our tax system. Adopting the tax limitation amendment would require prospective tax increases to achieve a two-thirds vote which means it will be more difficult to have a recurrence of one of the largest tax increases passed in 1993. Our Founding Fathers had the foresight to mandate a two-thirds majority vote on certain priorities issues. The fourth President of the United States, James Madison, a central figure in the development of the Constitution and a vocal supporter of majority rule, argued that the greatest threat to liberty and Republic came from unrestrained majority rule. And that is why they proposed a two-thirds majority for conviction in impeachment trials, expulsion of a Member of Congress, and to override a presidential veto, quorum of two-thirds in the Senate to elect a President, consent to a treaty and proposing a constitutional amendment.

Daniel Webster, a great Member of this body, said, "The power to tax is a power to destroy." Americans are simply taxed too much. The total tax burden is the highest since World War II. We have the Federal income tax, the payroll tax, the gasoline tax, various other Federal excise taxes, finally, State and local taxes. Wherever we turn, we can expect to pay a tax on something. Americans are paying taxes and at the same time they are trying to pay off their debt. They have mortgages, auto loans, credit card debt and school loans.

Americans also face the cost of complying with this tax code. According to the Tax Foundation, businesses and nonprofit corporations as well as individuals will spend an estimated 5.8 billion hours complying with the Federal income Tax Code, with an estimated compliance cost of almost \$200 billion. This amounts to imposing a 20.4 cent tax compliance charge for every dollar the income tax system collects.

Raising taxes comes all too easy for certain people here in Congress. It is the simplest solution for those who have affinity for increased spending around here. But this week we have the opportunity to make it harder to raise taxes. In this country supreme power resides in a body of citizens entitled to vote and is exercised by elected officials like ourselves and representatives responsible to them according to the law.

By passing the tax limitation amendment, we adhere to this definition of a Republic by requiring two-thirds of the Members, best representing the views of their constituents, to vote in favor of raising taxes.

So, Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H.J. Res. 96

when it comes to the House floor to show our appreciation and to follow the mandates of a good Republic.

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 talk about the need for a Medicare prescription drug benefit and particularly point out the failures of the Republican leadership in this House as well as the President in that they are not addressing this issue. They are not bringing up the prescription drug benefit. I was interested in hearing what the previous speaker, my colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS), said about how the Republicans wanted every American or every senior to have the same kind of package that Congressmen have.

Well, I have no evidence of that. So far the Republican leadership has talked about bringing up a prescription drug bill for about 2 months in a steady drumbeat that is going to happen this week, it is going to happen next week, it is going to happen next month; and we have no bill. And the suggestions we have seen about what kind of bill they are going to come out with is basically privatizing Medicare so that there is no guaranteed benefit at all. So when my colleague suggests that somehow seniors under the Republican bill are going to get the same kind of benefit that Congressmen have, there is no indication of that whatsoever from the Republican leadership. I have not seen anything to suggest that.

Let me say now, once again, I think many of my colleagues know that just before the Memorial Day recess we were told by the Republican leadership in the House that they were going to bring up a prescription drug bill for seniors. It was going to go to committee 2 weeks before the Memorial Day recess. It was going to come to the floor the week before the Memorial Day recess. It never happened. They came back after the Memorial Day recess. We had a week already that we were in session and they said we will bring up the bill this week. Then they said we will bring up the bill next week. Yesterday I heard that they were going to bring up the bill or announce the bill this coming Thursday. No bill yet. I have not seen it. There has been no notice in any of our committees of jurisdiction, the Committee on Energy and Commerce or the Committee on Ways and Means, that we will see this prescription drug bill.

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So I am calling upon the Republican leadership, let us address this issue. Seniors are hurting. They cannot afford to pay for prescription drugs. A lot of them go without. Bring up the bill.

Let us have the debate. Let us see whether or not the statements that my colleague from Florida made have any basis.

Everything that I have seen so far about the Republicans and what they are proposing is what I call a "privatization" of Medicare. They are saying that they want to bring up legislation that would take some money, almost like a voucher, and throw it to private insurance companies in the hope that they will provide drug-only policies to senior citizens who might be able to purchase such a policy and will get some help with it.

We know that privatization, trying to get insurance companies to offer these kinds of drug-only policies, does not work. The insurance executives, their trade group, have told Congress and the committees that they will not work; they do not want to sell that kind of insurance. It is unbelievable why they are just not willing to do what the Democrats have proposed and what most Americans want, which is to expand Medicare, a very good program that we have, yes, a government program, that provides for seniors' hospital care, that provides for seniors' doctors' bills, but does not provide for prescription drug, simply expand Medicare, very similar to what we do with part B, the coverage of doctor bills, and allow people to pay a very low premium per month. They get a good percentage of their prescription drug bills paid for, and it is a guarantee under Medicare, a very good existing program that works for senior citizens.

I do not know why the Republicans refuse to deal with this as an expansion of Medicare and instead talk about privatizing and giving some money to insurance companies in the hope that somehow seniors will be covered. That is not what the gentleman from Florida suggested, but that is what we are hearing from the Republican leadership.

The problem with Republicans proposal or what they are talking about is it does not address cost, does not address price. The problem right now, not just for seniors but for all Americans, is the cost of prescription drugs continues to escalate, double digit inflation for over the last 6 years. What we need to control in some way are these prices, and what the Democrats have said is let us have something like part B Medicare, like we have for our doctor bills where a person pays a very low premium per month, they have a very low deductible. I think it is a \$100 deductible for the course of the year; 80 percent of the cost of their prescription drugs are covered by the Federal Government.

Most important, we put a cost mechanism in place that we say under the Democrats' proposal that the Secretary of Health and Human Services is mandated to negotiate and bring prices down because now he is going to represent 30 or 40 million seniors, and he will be able to negotiate better prices.