

Mr. Speaker, in the United States, we take I think all too often for granted the rights and freedoms of our journalists. We just assume that it is true throughout the world. But it is not true. There are many countries that simply do not allow journalists to practice.

I urge my colleagues to join with me to draw attention to and take a stand against oppression of freedom of speech and freedom of the press, in this case Cuba; but there are other countries that have similar problems.

THE HIGH COST OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS IN THE UNITED STATES

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

MR. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to speak about an issue that unfortunately more and more Americans are becoming acutely aware of, that is, the high cost of prescription drugs here in the United States, especially relative to the prices that people are paying in other parts of the world, other industrialized countries, where we see enormous differentials for the same drugs made in the same plants under the same FDA approval.

I have a chart here, and it has a list. These are not my numbers; this is an independent group called the Life Extension Foundation. They have been doing research of this type for a number of years and have been very helpful in at least clarifying what is going on in terms of the way the drug companies set their prices.

The more we learn about this issue, the angrier we will become when we see what they are doing to American consumers. For example, here are roughly 15 of the most commonly prescribed drugs in the United States. Here is what we are paying on an average for a 30-day supply here in the United States, and on the other list we have what the average price in Europe is.

Now, some people say, well, some countries have price controls, and it is hard to compare apples to oranges, and all that. Well, let us talk about some countries that do not have price controls, not as we know they are: Germany, Switzerland. Those are two good examples. Let us look at what we are paying here in the United States and what they are paying in places like Germany and Switzerland.

Let us take a drug like Cipro. We all learned a lot about Cipro last November when we had the threats, and ultimately several postal workers lost their lives because of what happened last fall. We bought an awful lot of Cipro. To his credit, Secretary Tommy Thompson got a very good price on that Cipro that he bought.

But let us look at what the average consumer would have to pay for Cipro. Cipro is a drug made by a pharmaceutical company called Bayer, or we say it Bayer, here in the United States,

the same people that make the aspirin. In the United States, the average price for a 30-day supply of Cipro is \$87.99. That same drug in Berlin sells for \$40.75.

As we look down this list, we see some even bigger disparities: Claritin, a drug that is going off-patent still sells in the United States on average, or at least when this chart was put together a few months ago, sold for an average of \$89 for a 30-day supply. That exact same drug in Europe sells for \$18.75. Again, the same drug, the same FDA approval, made in the same plants, selling for a fraction of what they sell for in Europe.

Coumadin, a drug that I am very familiar with, my 85-year-old father takes Coumadin. It is a blood thinner very commonly prescribed for seniors. In fact, most of them, once they start on Coumadin, they stay on it for the rest of their lives. The price here in the United States on an average for a 30-day supply is \$64.88; the same drug in Europe sells for \$15.80.

If we go down the list, it makes us angry when we see the differences. A relatively simple drug like Premarin, in the United States it sells for an average of \$55.42; in Europe, the same drug, \$8.95. The list goes on. If anybody would like the entire list, they can contact my office. We will send it to them. Again, I did not create this chart. I cannot defend this chart, and neither can anybody else.

Here is another chart that cannot be explained or defended. Last year, the last year we have numbers for, what happened to prescription drug prices? In the United States, the average price for prescription drugs went up 19 percent. I mentioned that Coumadin that is now \$64 for a 30-day supply in the United States. Two years ago, that same drug sold for \$38 in the United States. That is how much it has gone up in just 2 years.

At the same time, the Social Security cost-of-living adjustments that we gave to those seniors who have to buy those drugs only went up 3.5 percent. This is unsustainable. This is wrong, and Congress ought to do something about it.

Let us get to the big numbers. Let us get to the big numbers. This is where it starts to really cost. This number on top is one, then an eight, then a zero and a zero and a zero and a zero and a zero and a zero and a zero and a zero and a zero, \$1.8 trillion. That is what the Congressional Budget Office tells us that seniors, these are people 65 years and older, will spend for prescription drugs in just the next 10 years, \$1.8 trillion.

Now, Members, conservatively, if we just open up the market, if we just allow seniors to buy drugs from other countries, and I want them to go to their local pharmacist, I want them to be able to go down to the local pharmacist and the pharmacist can say to them, listen, I can fill that out of my supply that is American, and the price

will be \$64, or I can order it from Europe for you on the Web, and we can have it here in 3 days, and the price will be \$18, or whatever the number is.

Markets work. Markets are more powerful than armies. If we simply do this, I believe we can save at least 35 percent; 35 percent of \$1.8 trillion is \$630 billion. That would go a long way to helping to pay for a benefit for those seniors who currently fall through the cracks.

Mr. Speaker, the time has come to open up the markets and allow Americans to have access to drugs at world market prices.

AMTRAK AND THE FUTURE OF OUR PASSENGER RAIL SYSTEM

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

MR. DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the important issue of Amtrak, and especially do I rise to address the future of our passenger rail system in the United States.

I am pleased to join with all of those who support an increase in transportation funding for our Nation's rail line. I encourage my fellow colleagues to support the National Defense Rail Act proposed by the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON).

Mr. Speaker, our national passenger rail system is in a state of financial crisis. Last week, David Gunn, the president of Amtrak, requested \$200 million in immediate funding. Without this necessary funding, Amtrak will be forced to shut down; perhaps not definitely, but even if indefinitely, any disruption of our Nation's rail system would be detrimental to the economy as a whole. Therefore, I am pleased to have this opportunity to support legislation that will create a high-speed national rail service that is on par with the best rail systems in the world.

Over the last 30 years, we have spent \$750 billion on our national highways and airports, but we have only spent \$25 billion on our national passenger rail system. Thus, it is not surprising to me that out of the 23 most industrialized nations in the world, the United States spends the least per capita on its national rail system.

We now stand at a time where we must decide whether we should keep massaging and bailing out Amtrak, lending it just enough money to survive, or whether we should create a high-speed train network that will encourage more ridership, more expedient service, and a viable alternative to aviation or automobile travel.

In the wake of September 11, we need a world-class high-speed national rail system. And in the weeks following the terrorist attack, people turned to Amtrak to get home from work or travel. Since travel by plane was not an option, the only way to get anywhere was by train. Across the country, Amtrak revenue and ridership increased significantly. In the northeast corridor alone,

revenue shot up 13.5 percent, and ridership increased 4.6 percent. If we were to improve our national system, revenue and ridership would surely increase, easing congestion on our highways and runways.

Transportation by rail is vital to the economy. Businesses depend on it, workers depend on it, and industry depends on it. It is vital to the environment. Trains use less fuel, emit less pollution, and cause less commuter congestion.

For much too long, we have ignored the great potential that a world-class rail system could bring to our country's economy and security. I encourage all Members of Congress to join me and my colleagues in passing the National Defense Rail Act and support the future of expedient travel in the United States. The time has come to invest in the future of high-speed rail transportation by overhauling our Nation's passenger rail infrastructure.

I share the vision of the gentlewoman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) and urge all of my colleagues to join with us as we propose and develop a national rail system second to none in the world.

THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A FEDERAL COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT AMTRAK

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

Mr. SANDLIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight. And the Democrats rise tonight, to stress the importance of maintaining a Federal commitment to support Amtrak. I, along with 150 of our colleagues, support providing Amtrak with the \$1.2 billion it needs to maintain its current success on into 2003.

A working national passenger rail network is essential for east Texas and America, but the Federal Government must provide resources for capital improvements if Amtrak is to continue to service the Nation at affordable, competitive rates.

According to Amtrak, without this funding Amtrak will be forced to eliminate nearly all long-distance passenger trains by October 2002, which would be disastrous for rural America. Rural America and east Texas support a national rail service. We do not approve of shutting down rural routes while funding only a northeast corridor commuter route.

Under Amtrak's proposal, service between Boston and Washington will remain, while lines like the Texas Eagle route will be shut down if Congress fails to provide sufficient resources for fiscal year 2003. Amtrak's long-distance passenger line provides critical transportation options for rural areas like east Texas, allowing rural residents as great an access to transportation as residents of fully urbanized areas.

In many cases, Amtrak's Texas Eagle is the only means east Texans have to travel long distances. If Amtrak is

forced to close its long distance lines, the main links between Texas and cities would be severed, crippling the local economy and retarding rural development in my district and across the Nation.

Mr. Speaker, the people of east Texas use and support Amtrak. Ridership of the Texas Eagle line and revenue from the Texas Eagle line has increased by 9 percent since January, 2001, exceeding budget projections.

□ 2000

These positive developments have been achieved through bold steps taken by the people of East Texas to do everything in their power to keep the Texas Eagle line running and bold steps from Amtrak to reduce its management to maximize efficiency.

In March, Amtrak announced that its CEO and president George Warrington was resigning to move on to another project after raising Amtrak's revenues to a record \$2.1 billion for the 2001 fiscal year. Capitalizing on this vacancy as a new opportunity, Amtrak's board hired David Gunn to continue improving Amtrak's record. This new administration lead by Mr. Gunn is making radical changes to increase its ridership and revenues to achieve fiscal responsibility in a common sense way.

Mr. Gunn has wide experience with the commuter rail industry both in America and in Canada serving as the president of the New York City Transit Agency from 1984 to 1990 and the chief general manager of the Toronto Transit Commission from 1995 to 1999. He carries with him an exceptional international reputation based on his ability to unite labor, business, local communities and governments to successfully improve financial stability and plan for the future. With this strong track record, Mr. Gunn brings to Amtrak the ability to overcome its financial difficulties through progressive policies and realistic plans for the future.

Just yesterday, Amtrak's governing board approved changes to consolidate authority and remove unnecessary oversight. These measures include cutting the number of vice president titles from 84 to approximately 20, clearly assigning the authority over cars and locomotives to five people when 16 currently share the responsibility, and consolidating Amtrak's three operating divisions and its mail and express business into the company headquarters in Washington. The new streamlined chain of command will vastly improve Amtrak's decision making and efficiency. But any attempts to solve Amtrak's crisis will be for naught without strong Congressional support to match Amtrak's bold new policies.

Now, Amtrak's opponents argue that the Federal Government has bailed out Amtrak before to no effect, and that private passenger lines are the only solution. Not so. In 1997, Congress reauthorized Amtrak for 5 years at \$5.2 bil-

lion. However, only \$2.7 billion was actually appropriated, barely 52 percent of the money. This does not constitute a bail out. In fact, this latest figure is only the continuation of a decades old pattern of underfunding Amtrak while at the same time demanding that it become profitable. In essence, under the guise of supporting Amtrak, Congress has instead set it up for failure, providing Amtrak with just enough money to survive another year but not giving it the capital to develop necessary infrastructure projects that could make it self sufficient by 2001.

No other publicly funded transportation system in America, much less a comparable national passenger rail system in the world has succeeded without significant public capital investment to modernize systems, enhance security and fund long distance service. In fact, no private passenger line could succeed under those same circumstances. Privatization of long distance passenger service would be tantamount to termination of long distance passenger rail service. It would result in the loss of rail service in many rural communities and would result in the lay off of many, many dedicated Amtrak employees. Only short distance commuter routes would remain. The people of East Texas need and deserve access to a national rail network as much if not more so than communities in the Northeastern United States. They do not need a multitude of new rail bureaucracies without adequate resources.

Importantly, if Amtrak is to be reduced to servicing the Northeast corridor alone, as a regional transportation network, it should operate without Federal support.

With proper funding Amtrak can succeed. H.R. 4545 will provide that funding. With \$1.9 billion Amtrak can make necessary changes. America and East Texas deserve a strong passenger rail system and I will continue to fight for Amtrak.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. JEFF MILLER of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

SOCIAL SECURITY AND THE DEBT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, this evening I would like to dedicate my remarks to Social Security, its trust funds and our growing national debt.

In January of last year, our Nation finally moved to an annual balanced budget after decades of being awash in growing debt as far as the eye could see. Many of us fought very hard to