

We are talking about an industry that has been one of the most profitable industries in America, return on investment, return on sales, return on equity, for almost every one of the last 20 years. We are also talking about an industry, the prescription drug industry, which has the lowest tax rate of any industry in America. We are also talking about an industry where half of the research and development that flows to new prescription drugs is given by taxpayers through the National Institutes of Health and foundations and others. Yet Americans are rewarded by paying more for their prescription drugs than people in any other country in the world.

America's seniors pay two and three times what seniors in Canada and France and Germany and Israel and Japan and nations all over the globe pay. The reason for that, Mr. Speaker, is in large part because of the lobbying force, the lobbying strength, the prowess of the prescription drug industry.

There are more than 600 lobbyists for the prescription drug industry that lobby this Congress, more than 600 people. There are very close ties between the prescription drug industry and the President of the United States. There are very close ties between the prescription drug industry and the Republican leadership in this Congress.

All you had to do was watch last week in the Committee on Energy and Commerce, watch vote after vote after vote on the prescription drug legislation, where many of us were saying we want a Medicare prescription drug benefit, we wanted to do something about prices, we believe that senior citizens should have as good a benefit as Members of Congress. Every amendment we had to do that, Republicans down the line in every case voted no.

I had an amendment to the legislation that said no senior should get a prescription drug benefit less than any Member of Congress. That was voted down on a party-line vote. Other Democrats had amendments to try to control prices, to try to bring prices down, to try to bring competition into the prescription drug business so we would see prices drop. Those were voted down on party-line votes. But when it came to subsidizing insurance companies for prescription drug benefit, that is what the Republicans supported.

Let me compare the two pieces of legislation, the Democratic plan and the Republican plan; and you can see the influence that the prescription drug industry had over Republican leaders.

The Democratic plan has a \$25-a-month premium. The Republican plan has a premium that will be set by the insurance companies, somewhere between \$35 and \$85 a month. The Democratic plan had a \$100 deductible. The Republican plan had a deductible, again set by the insurance industry, but probably upwards of \$250.

The Democratic plan had for the first \$1,000 of costs, out-of-pocket costs for

seniors, they would only pay 20 percent, the first \$1,000; 20 percent of the second \$1,000; and the government would pick up the cost beyond that. In the Republican plan, the seniors will reach into their pockets and pay thousands of dollars more than under the Democratic plan.

As the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) said earlier, the Republican plan does nothing to restrain prices so that Americans will continue to pay two and three and four times for their prescriptions what people in every other country in the world pay.

Now, not coincidentally, last week we stopped our markup in the middle of the day one day so the Republican Members could go to a fundraiser underwritten by the prescription drug industry. The Chair of the fundraiser was the CEO of a British prescription drug company GlaxoWellcome. He and his company contributed \$250,000 to get Republicans elected to Congress. Other drug companies gave \$150,000 and \$250,000 to this event.

The next day after this event, which raised millions and millions of dollars for Republicans, millions of which, several hundred thousand, millions of which actually came from drug companies, the next day this committee voted down the line over and over again, with Republicans supporting the drug industry.

It should come as no surprise as you watch this drug debate unfold this week, or maybe when we come back through the month of July, you will see Republicans continue to do the bidding of the prescription drug industry. That is one reason the Democratic plan should pass, which is written for and by seniors over the Republican plan, which is written for and by the drug companies.

TAX CUTS BENEFITING AMERICANS

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

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, just a brief response to my friend from Ohio's partisan comments. It is always interesting that some will criticize campaign contributions, when their own party has solicited and accepted campaign contributions from the same industries or interests. So hypocrisy is nothing new in Washington D.C.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk this morning about an issue of fairness, fundamental fairness. Let me begin by just drawing attention to what we in Washington and around the country call the Bush tax cut.

Last year, with the leadership of the House Republican majority, we passed through the House and Senate, and the President signed into law, an across-the-board tax cut that cut taxes for every American. Over 100 million Americans saw their taxes lowered. We

eliminated the death tax, the marriage tax penalty, and we made it easier to save for retirement and for college education.

Unfortunately, because of a quirk in the rules of the archaic rules of the other body, that tax cut had to be temporary. As we debate various issues before the Congress, it is always interesting that in the Congress historically it has been easy to raise taxes permanently, it has been easy to increase spending permanently, but it is very difficult to cut taxes permanently.

Today I want to talk a little bit about one issue that I have been very involved in, an issue of fairness, and that is, is it right, is it fair that under our Tax Code millions of married working couples where a husband and wife are both in the workforce and because they are married, they pay higher taxes? We call it the marriage tax penalty.

On average, the marriage tax penalty today is about \$1,700. Where you have a husband and wife both in the workforce, they pay on average about \$1,700 in higher taxes just because they are married. We thought it was wrong that under our Tax Code society's most basic institution, which is marriage, was being punished.

I have a couple here that is from the district that I represent, Jose and Magdalena Castillo, their son Eduardo, daughter Carolina. They live in Joliet, Illinois. They are laborers, construction workers.

In the case of Jose and Magdalena Castillo, prior to the Bush tax cut being signed into law they paid about \$1,150 more in higher taxes. The reason that a married couple where you have both the man and the woman in the workforce and your taxes are higher because you are married is because, in the case of Jose and Magdalena, like millions of other married working couples, they file jointly, which means that you combine your income. That pushed them into a higher tax bracket and cost them \$1,150 in higher taxes.

In Joliet, Illinois, \$1,150 is several months' worth of car payments; it is several months of daycare for Eduardo and Carolina while mom and dad are at work. It is real money for real people.

I was proud that one of the centerpieces of the Bush tax cut this past year, signed into law last June by President Bush a little over a year ago, was our legislation to eliminate and wipe out the marriage tax penalty.

Unfortunately, because this provision was temporary, unless we make permanent the elimination of the marriage tax penalty, that we make permanent the Bush tax cut, 36 million married working couples, like Jose and Magdalena Castillo of Joliet, Illinois, will see their marriage penalty come back, where they are going to end up paying higher taxes just because they are married. The Congressional Budget

Office estimates that 36 million married working couples will see a tax increase of almost \$42 billion unless Congress makes permanent our effort to eliminate the marriage tax penalty.

I was very proud, just 2 weeks ago this House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly in a bipartisan way to make permanent the elimination of the marriage tax penalty. Every House Republican voted "yes," and even though the Democratic leadership argued against our efforts to eliminate the marriage tax penalty, 60 Democrats broke ranks with their leadership and joined with House Republicans to vote to make permanent our effort to eliminate the marriage tax penalty.

My hope is both the House and Senate will be able to accomplish elimination of the marriage tax penalty permanently and that we will be able to get this legislation to the President this year. It is a priority.

When you think about it, in Washington, D.C., the marriage tax penalty suffered by Jose and Magdalena Castillo of \$1,150, that is pennies. That is chump change in Washington, D.C. But to the real people back home, in the south Suburbs of Chicago, in Joliet Illinois, \$1,150 is real money. In the case of Eduardo and Carolina, for their children they could set that money aside for their college education in education savings accounts.

Mr. Speaker, let us eliminate the marriage tax penalty permanently; and let us hope the Senate joins with the House, that we do it in a bipartisan way and get it done this year.

HELPING SENIORS WITH PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS

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

Mr. FOLEY. Mr. Speaker, I commend the gentleman from Illinois on his excellent advocacy to eliminate the marriage tax penalty. It is a perverse thing in the Tax Code that would have us tax marriage, and I am glad we are successfully removing that barrier from families so they can spend more of their disposable income on their children, rather than sending it here to Washington.

I am quite perplexed with the statements made earlier by the gentleman from Ohio relative to Medicare and prescription drug coverage. Regrettably, rather than talking substance, they talk political attack.

I come from Florida, the seventh largest senior population of all 435 districts, my 16th Congressional District based in West Palm Beach, Florida.

Seniors care about Social Security, seniors care about Medicare, and seniors do care about prescription drugs. But rather than having a fair and full debate on these very important programs, the minority of this House chooses instead to demagogue and de-

mean, disparage and create basically smoke screens.

Now, for 40 years they ran this place, and never once did they offer prescription drug coverage. In fact, their party was the one that actually put in a penalty to Social Security recipients by taxing their Social Security income. And yet they talk that they are "senior-friendly" and here to do the "people's work."

They raise issues like fundraising. The gentleman from Ohio suggested we did not deal with the very important bill because the Republicans were at a fundraiser. Well, let me underscore that our committee, the Committee on Ways and Means and the Committee on Energy and Commerce worked and labored mightily to produce a bill that will provide prescription drug coverage. No fundraiser interfered with our pursuit of this important dialogue on behalf of America's seniors.

Now, I have to chuckle because the party that advocated campaign finance reform, the ones that made it the centerpiece of their campaign attacks, the ones that said it was the most important piece of legislation ever to be voted on in this House, were the first ones to advance arguments against the very law that they passed. They were the first ones to send lawyers down to the Federal Election Commission to try and find loopholes in campaign finance reform so that they could continue to raise their gross excess sums of money.

Rather than point fingers and start having a dialogue on campaign finance reform, I would prefer we talk about the things that matter to seniors, and that is a bill that we have on this floor. Seniors in my district are not greedy. Seniors in my district realize for a plan to work it must function fairly and equitably. It must not tax the Medicare system beyond its capacity.

In addition to Medicare prescription drugs, we still have to provide home health care, nursing home care and hospitalization. We also have to provide a myriad of other services under Medicare for our seniors, our most vulnerable.

They talk as if it is a one-size-fits-all, pass prescription drugs and the world goes on and lives happily ever. Their plans costs \$900 billion over 10 years. In their own budget documents, they do not even have the money provided for this giveaway program that they suggest is important.

Seniors need help with prescription drugs, and we are providing it. We are not trying to buy votes for the next election; we are trying to provide a plan that provides the poorest seniors, the sickest seniors, and helps every senior with their drug plan. The Committee on Ways and Means spent a lot of time and effort in providing this drug opportunity.

I would suggest that if Members of the other side of the aisle really want to engage in concrete debate, rather than having objections and motions to

rise and motions to table and motions to adjourn, we have gone through that charade on many important bills on this floor, they sit there and repeatedly stop the work process on this floor because their nose is out of joint about some little issue, and then they wonder why we do not have things on the floor to vote on. If they quit moving to rise, we may stay long enough to consider the very important debate.

My grandmother came from Poland. She was a maid in a Travel Lodge Motel. She cleaned 28 rooms a day. She died at the age of 88 with \$10,000 in the bank, her life savings. She desperately depended on Medicare, and she desperately depended on Social Security; and in her memory I am on this floor, as I am in committee, fighting to preserve those two fundamental programs, as well as adding a very important key piece to that puzzle, which is prescription drugs.

It is shameful the way the other side of the aisle conducts the debate on this issue. Rather than talking intelligently to seniors and talking about relief for prescription drugs, they demagogue and scare seniors, scaring seniors. It would be a crime, if it was not so sad, that they sit there and tell seniors that somehow our party does not care about them. I can assure you we do, we care deeply.

Republicans will deliver a plan that meets the test of time and meets the test of seniors.

PROVIDING MODERN MEDICARE BENEFITS

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

Mr. RYAN of Wisconsin. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to follow up on what my colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. FOLEY), was talking about, and that is this week we here in Congress are considering a prescription drug benefit. But we are doing much more than that; we are working on trying to fix Medicare.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we realize that when Medicare was created in 1965, it was created at that time to provide comprehensive health care for all seniors over the age of 65. That was the goal of Medicare. It is a good goal.

But the problem we face today is in the year 2002 seniors on Medicare are getting 1965 health care. They are not getting the year 2002 health care, because in 1965, we did not have all these wonderful health care technologies. We did not have all these breakthrough prescription drugs. Then it was a take-two-aspirin-and-call-me-in-the-morning kind of society. So Medicare reimbursed people if they needed a procedure, if they needed an operation; and that is how Medicare works today.

So what you have seen occur over time is as health care technologies