

their visas this way, never being interviewed by anyone in the consular office.

When the program began, it was advertised as helping qualified applicants obtain U.S. visas quickly and easily. Applicants will no longer have to take time off from work, they said, no longer have to wait in long lines or under the hot sun in crowded waiting rooms. I am quoting from State Department documents.

Here are some of the September 11 terrorists who came into this country under the visa express program. Salem Al-Hamzi, age 20, arrived in the United States with a tourist visa obtained through visa express.

Here is another one: Khalid Al-Midhar, a 25-year-old gentleman. He was one of the people on Flight 77 that crashed into the Pentagon.

Here is another one: Abdulaziz Al-Omari, 28, arrived in the U.S. on a tourist visa in June of 2001, a pilot of the American Airlines Flight 111 that crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Centers.

Now, under this program, the Saudi citizens just go to a Saudi travel agent, and they fill out a two-page form. They paid a fee and went home and waited for their visas to arrive in the mail. There was no interview with any American official. One senior consular affairs official describes the program as an open-door policy for terrorists to come into the United States.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that we have our priorities out of order here. This is not customer service; it is national security. Visa issuance must be in the homeland security system from top to bottom. This is the only way the Secretary of Homeland Security will be able to completely and thoroughly protect our borders, by preventing terrorists from ever making it into our homeland.

We must change the culture of the way we issue visas. It is no longer sufficient for this process to be an entry-level position for a person at a college. It is simply too vital to our national security.

Mr. Speaker, security begins abroad. I feel the burden is on the administration to prove to us why the Bureau of Consular Affairs is fragmented and a pseudo part of homeland security. Thus far, they have not convinced me of the need for this fragmentation in this area. I support putting all of consular affairs in homeland security.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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DRUG INDUSTRY NEEDS TO CLEAN UP ITS ACT

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, earlier today I heard a Republican member of the Committee on Ways and Means absolutely distort the truth about the Democrats' prescription drug plan, saying that it requires that seniors go into the Democrats' plan whether or not they choose to, whether or not they already have drug coverage. There is no place in this debate for those kinds of fabrications and those kind of lies, and I just want to set the record straight.

Mr. Chairman, the prescription drug industry needs to clean up its act. You know it. I know it. American consumers know it.

The brand name drug industry has no qualms about charging American consumers the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs, even though American tax dollars and American contributions to private foundations fund nearly half their research, even though the prescription drug industry in this country is the most profitable industry in America, even though the prescription drug industry gets tax breaks so huge they have only half the tax liability of any other industry in this country, and even though more than 50 million Americans have no drug coverage, some of whom must choose between food and their medicine.

Prescription drugs are not a luxury item. It is not okay that the drug industry overcharges U.S. consumers for products our own tax dollars helped to produce. The drug industry has tremendous influence over this Congress and especially this White House. Unfortunately, the situation may have to get worse before the Federal Government finally takes a stand against the outrageous pricing schemes of the drug industry. Until that happens, market competition is the only tool we have to bring down prices.

When generics enter the market, the price typically drops as much as 90 percent. Market competition expands access to Americans who cannot afford the monopoly prices that are charged by the brand name companies. It spurs drug companies to earn their profits by developing new drugs, rather than by overcharging for existing products. It is much easier, obviously, to overcharge for existing products than to develop new ones. The brand name drug industry has taken to exploiting loopholes in the FDA drug approval process to block generic competition. So not only do drug companies charge Americans the highest price in the world while those drugs are under patent, these companies then try to charge Americans ridiculous prices after their patents expire by blocking generics from entering the market.

You would think Congress would at least be interested in keeping drug companies from gaming the patent system as a means of cheating American consumers.

Governors from both parties, major businesses like GM and Marriott and Verizon and unions and consumer groups and health insurers have demanded that Congress close these legal loopholes. Closing these loopholes would save American consumers literally hundreds of billions of dollars in the next 10 years. Yet, last week, Republican leadership blocked action on an amendment that would end drug industry abuses. This amendment simply would have prevented drug companies from artificially extending their patents, the drugs' protected patents and stop them from gaming the FDA patent system.

Last week, Republican leadership blocked consideration of this amendment. They would not, in fact, even let the Committee on Energy and Commerce consider the amendment. It may not have been a coincidence that the same week that our committee was marking up the prescription drug bill, that same week that committee adjourned early one afternoon to go to a Republican fund-raiser which was underwritten by the prescription drug industry. The chair of that Republican fund-raiser which netted \$30 million was the CEO of a British drug company, GlaxoWellcome, donated \$250,000 to the Republican cause. The CEO was joined by CEOs of other drug companies which contributed \$50,000, \$100,000, \$200,000, \$250,000 to this Republican fund-raiser.

It should also come as no surprise that the next day after the fund-raiser Republicans returned to the committee and, in regular party line votes, voted against any kind of real reform, any kind of pro-senior prescription drug plan.

The Democratic prescription drug plan written by and for seniors will bring drug costs down. That is what seniors want. The Republican prescription drug plan written by and for the prescription drug industry does nothing to bring prices down. That is what prescription drug companies want.

I ask my colleagues to support the Democratic plan when it comes in front of the House and reject the drug-company-sponsored Republican plan.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mrs. CAPPS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, in 1965 we established Medicare because the private insurance industry demonstrated that it could not provide affordable access to health care for seniors, at least not at rates that seniors could afford. Now, 37 years later, this Congress will be considering important changes to

improve this most successful government program.

Everyone seems to recognize that we must add prescription drug coverage to the program.

Older Americans fill more than one-third of all the prescriptions that doctors write and will spend \$1.8 trillion over the next decade on these critical medications, much of it from their own pockets. Our parents, our grandparents, the seniors living in our neighborhood need and deserve our help. But I am afraid that some have lost track of the important lessons of 1965, that markets forces are inadequate to this task.

Now I recognize the power of the market. Since arriving in Congress I have voted for tax cuts and supported free trade and generally taken a pro-business stance. But here, when we are trying to provide health care for our senior citizens and those with disabilities, we have seen the markets fall short.

The most recent example is the Medicare+Choice program, created to harness the efficiencies of the marketplace. The hope, indeed, the promise from the program's supporters, was that HMOs would offer seniors quality or better care for less money than it took Medicare.

At first, it seemed to work. We have paid the HMO slightly less than it cost to cover a senior through a fee-for-service program; and seniors enrolled in the program in droves because it had low co-payments and at least a few more benefits.

But then the HMO's said they needed more money, a lot of it. So we gave them more money; and then they started pulling out of a lot of areas, like my district. And where they did not pull out, they cut back on benefits a lot. They raised premiums, they raised co-pays, and they still asked for more money from Congress.

In truth, this program has not been an overwhelming success, to say the least. I am willing to continue to try to fix it, but we should be aware of its problems and shortfalls, and we should not base the rest of Medicare on it, particularly a prescription drug benefit.

Last week, the Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Committee on Ways and Means considered legislation that would do just that and provide a prescription drug benefit through a program similar to Medicare+Choice. Many of my colleagues and I offered amendments to provide a prescription drug benefit through traditional Medicare to these proposals, but the majority defeated each and every attempt to improve this bill. Instead, they have sent legislation to the House floor that would privatize Medicare, impose unfair cost sharing on seniors and not even offer medication coverage that most seniors could count on.

Even the insurance companies, the people who are supposed to administer and offer these plans, these companies are unenthusiastic about the leadership's proposal.

One of HIAA's past presidents, former Representative Bill Gradison, is quoted as being "very skeptical" of this proposal working.

Even if the insurance companies do offer the plans and do provide the benefits the majority describes, it still will not help the seniors who most need it. In fact, their proposal pays less the more seniors needs medication. It offers no help to seniors with drug costs between \$2,000 and \$3,700 or \$4,700 per year. This means that sicker seniors with most health problems, those who most need medications, will not be able to afford them again.

Now, 37 years ago America made a promise to our seniors. We told them they would have health care when they needed it most. We need to follow through on that promise. We need to give our seniors affordable prescription drug coverage.

When this legislation comes to the floor, my colleagues and I will try once again to give seniors a prescription drug benefit they can depend upon. We will offer seniors a reliable, voluntary benefit within the Medicare structure, comparable to the coverage a senior receives for other Medicare services. In fact, unlike the bill that will come before Congress, our plan makes sure seniors get access to the same level of prescription drug coverage that a Member of Congress or another Federal employee receives. This is only fair.

This plan offers seniors real help. It covers 80 percent of the cost of their medication. It will prevent seniors from spending more than \$2,000 a year on their medication. It will not rely on the goodwill or poor business sense of insurance companies; and it will guarantee coverage in all areas, urban, suburban and rural. A senior in California would be able to count on the same benefit that a senior in Kansas or a senior in New York City has and vice versa.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to oppose the majority's bill that will give our seniors false hopes that will be dashed on the rocks of reality and to support the alternative for a voluntary, affordable bill that will be offered by the Democratic side.

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

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

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. NORTON addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

GIVE SENIORS AFFORDABLE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, get the senior tour buses gassed up to travel to Canada, because under the Republican prescription drug plan seniors will not find any relief from the high costs of prescription drugs. In fact, Americans pay three to four times more for their medications than any other people in the world; and the prices of the 50 most commonly prescribed drugs for seniors increased last year nearly three times the rates of inflation.

Yet the Republican bill does not do one thing to reduce the root cause of our Nation's crisis in access to affordable life-saving medications and that is their costs.

Under the Republican plan, seniors would be forced to purchase drugs through private drug policies, another slippery slope to the dangerous path to privatization.

And as if attempting to privatize Medicare were not enough, the Republican bill covers less than a quarter of Medicare beneficiaries' estimated drug costs over the next 10 years.

Frankly, the Republican bill preserves the inflated prices of one of their biggest set of contributors. It is no wonder the pharmaceutical companies showed up in droves last week at the Republican party's \$30 million fund raising bash here in Washington.

In fact, Bob Novak from CNN gave us insight into that fund-raiser. He said, "This is one of the great fund-raisers of all time, because people going to see these things for 20 years had never found them so crowded. It was chair to chair, back to back." And they had to pay \$100,000 to get into the photo session with the President. If you wanted to sit on the platform with the President, that cost a little more. You had to pay \$250,000 in order to do that.

I guess they will try to get the government they are paying for unless the American people pay attention.

Now with all the high rhetoric surrounding the Republican plan one might think it provides a real benefit, but take a closer look. Under the Republican plan you may, and I stress may, be able to choose from a private program that will cost you \$35 a