

In short, the Democratic plan brings our country one step closer to insuring access to all people for much needed care, while the Republican Prescription Privatization plan is a divisive tool that will enrich the insurance and pharmaceutical industry.

The Republican plan gives authority to insurance companies and HMOs to prey on Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries.

Unlike the Republican bill, the Democrats won't punish you for getting sick.

I urge my colleagues to vote against the Republican Prescription Privatization bill.

HELL IN A CUBAN PRISON

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) had a wonderful idea the other week. We should speak every single week about the men and women who are languishing in prisons in the totalitarian state of Cuba, that island that has been for 44 years oppressed by a totalitarian dictator. So each week we bring forth, a number of us here, different political prisoners and speak specifically about their cases to remind our colleagues and those who will listen about the horrors just 90 miles from the shores of the United States.

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The following are excerpts, Mr. Speaker, from a letter from dissident Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leyva who is blind. These excerpts of a letter were sent out of his prison in Holguin, Cuba, as recorded by his wife Maritza Calderin. The letter was sent to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

To Sylvia Iriondo of mothers and Women Against Repression. This is a letter, Mr. Speaker, sent out of prison by Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leyva.

After 13 months in prison, I have not been tried or sentenced by any court even as efforts have been made to persuade me to betray God and human rights and collaborate with the dictatorship. Since mid-December, State security used inmate Joe Prado, as he calls himself, to throw in my cell a substance that produced a burning sensation on the skin and nasal congestion, a great deal of phlegm and bronchial inflammation. The situation still continues.

Since January, they have added another substance to the sawdust they throw at me. This one gives me the sensation of millions of bugs constantly running all over me. It causes a great deal of itching and prevents me from sleeping. I do not know if this is a biological substance or chemical agent, but I know it is not insects because when I touch my skin there are no actual bugs that I can feel, although this sensation is palpable.

Normally the sawdust shower is a daily occurrence. Yesterday it started

around 6:00 p.m. when I was on my knees praying. The sensation is that of a multitude of bugs suddenly coming down on my face and my body. This torment continues until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning.

The inmate follows me everywhere. I have to eat out of a can that I try to keep covered all the time because he will throw the nausea-provoking substance into the food.

Sometimes I feel as if I have a chain attached to my body and the weight of the world on my shoulders. I feel that I am going to collapse, that I cannot take this anymore, but I pray to God, and Jesus Christ gives me strength. It is a constant struggle, a constant torture.

On February 1, I placed my mattress in front of the cell's iron bar doors to get some fresh air. Officer Fabu, the unit chief, snatched the mattress away from me, threw me on the floor, took me by the neck and dragged me. He told me that if I wanted to sleep, I could sleep on the bare floor with the dirt, other prisoner's shoes, roaches, ants, mice, et cetera.

One night they threw so much of the substance into the cell that it was as if the walls were boiling. So I had to retreat to my bed and resign myself to do without the little bit of fresh air I was getting through the iron bars.

The substance also causes acute pain in both of my eye sockets. The pain is so severe that at times it seems my eyes are popping out. Every day the unit chief threatens me with death if I continue the hunger strike to protest the prosecution's request of 8 years in prison.

They do not allow me to speak to my lawyer and I do not have religious assistance or access to any information. I am only allowed to listen to the round tables and the State-run newscasts. For the skeptics, I can say that hell does exist and Satan shows all of his faces here.

In here, I listen to the weeping of young and old women, their terrible and frightful laments forever embedded in my mind. They plead because they are locked in cells that are like drawers where are held men, women and the elderly, the sick and the incapacitated. They plead because the four walls become a grave site.

These are catacombs where people scream but the sound is drowned out by a hermetically sealed metal door. When the women plead, the prison guards laugh and say, "What they want is a man."

I trust God and our Lord, Jesus Christ, to give me the strength to face any situation, whether to live in squalor, as I live now, or to die and meet my Lord and my God.

The political prisoner of Cuba, Mr. Speaker, 90 miles from the shores of the United States, an island that has suffered 44 years of totalitarian and oppression while the world does nothing, but we do not forget and we will not continue denouncing the horrors of the

totalitarianism that the people in Cuba suffer and we will not stop struggling until Cuba is free.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey). 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.)

CHECK WITH THE SENIOR CITIZENS

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

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, once upon a time, in 1989, there was a bill that had passed the United States Congress and was signed into law called the catastrophic health care bill, and it had bipartisan support, and all of the national organizations of senior citizens supported that legislation, and it was supposed to provide catastrophic coverage to senior citizens for health care.

One problem, no one had really checked with rank and file senior citizens to find out if they wanted this legislation that caused them to have the highest effective tax rate of any Americans, to pay for benefits that they thought simply were not worth it. In other words, the senior citizens sat down with their calculators and figured out they were not interested in this legislation that had passed.

This is a photo that appeared on the front page of the Chicago Tribune in August of 1989. Here we see some senior citizens who are clearly very angry, with signs surrounding an automobile in which was the chairman of the powerful House Committee on Ways and Means. These senior citizens were not exactly in a friendly mood and were telling this chairman in no uncertain terms that they wanted the repeal of the catastrophic health care bill.

It was not very long afterwards that this sparked a rebellion of senior citizens across the country, and in a rare occurrence in this body the catastrophic health care bill was repealed.

I think this should serve as a warning to all of my colleagues. Check with the senior citizens. You can sit here all day and all night and say the problem is that Medicare is outdated, that it is antiquated or you can say what the Chairman of the powerful House Committee on Ways and Means of today said, To those who say that the bill proposed by the Republicans would end Medicare as we know it, our answer is we certainly hope so. Seniors listen: We certainly hope so.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the seniors are listening. Old fashioned Medicare is not very good, says the chairman, the Republican chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means.

You better check with those seniors, because what they tell us is they like Medicare. They want Medicare. The only thing wrong with Medicare is that it does not cover enough, like prescription drugs, but what they like about it is that it is a known benefit, it is a known premium, and it is there for them when they need it.

Another word that is used all the time is choice. We are going to give senior citizens choices now. Well, I have to tell my colleagues, in all the years that I was the executive director of the Illinois State Council of Senior Citizens and in all the years that I was in the State legislature and now in Congress, never has a senior citizen come up to me and said, Congresswoman, what I want is a choice of HMOs, a choice of insurance companies, send me those brochures so I can pick, tell those insurance agents to get me on the phone so they can pitch their insurance company to me.

Seniors want the kind of choice they get under Medicare, a choice of doctors, a choice of hospitals, a choice of specialists. That is the kind of choices that they want.

In fact, the only choice under this Republican bill is the choice that HMOs and insurers get, not senior citizens, because private drug plans, HMOs, get to choose what premiums to charge. There is no uniform benefit of premium under Medicare.

Private drug plans get to choose the copayments that they will charge. Private drug plans get to choose what pharmacies are in their network. They get to choose what drugs are covered. So if you want to give the HMOs and the insurance companies that kind of choice, then this bill is for you, but if you want to give senior citizens what they really want, then you are going to expand Medicare the way the Democrats have proposed, by giving them a prescription drug benefit under Medicare that they can count on, that they know what the premium is.

This legislation that is passed in the House is going to do exactly what the chairman said. It is going to destroy Medicare. It will be the end of Medicare. That is what happens in 2010 with this bill. So if you do not want to be chased down the street, then all of us better say no to the Republican bill.

HOMELAND SECURITY TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS ACT OF 2003

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

Mr. COX. Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the following exchange of letters relating to yesterday's debate on H.R. 1416, the Homeland Security Technical Corrections Act of 2003.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,
Washington, DC, May 14, 2003.

Hon. CHRIS COX,
Chairman, Select Committee on Homeland Security,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN COX: In recognition of the desire to expedite floor consideration of H.R. 1416, the "Homeland Security Technical Corrections Act of 2003," the Committee on the Judiciary hereby waives consideration of the bill. Section 11 of H.R. 1416 creates new §5 in the Homeland Security Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-296). New §5 mandates that any report or notification required by the Homeland Security Act be submitted to the Select Committee on Homeland Security as well as to any other Committees named in the Act. Section 225 of the Homeland Security Act incorporated the Cyber Security Enhancement Act which, among many other things, requires the Attorney General to report to the Judiciary Committee regarding the use of electronic surveillance in emergency situations and requires the U.S. Sentencing Commission to submit a report in response to the Cyber Security Enhancement Act. To the extent that §11 of H.R. 1416 affects these reports required by §225 of the Homeland Security Act, these provisions fall within the Committee on the Judiciary's Rule X jurisdiction. However, given the need to expedite this legislation, I will not seek a sequential referral based on their inclusion.

The Committee on the Judiciary takes this action with the understanding that the Committee's jurisdiction over these provisions is in no way diminished or altered. I would appreciate your including this letter in the Congressional Record during consideration of H.R. 1416 on the House floor.

Sincerely,
F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, Jr.,
Chairman.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC, May 15, 2003.

Hon. F. JAMES SENSENBRENNER, Jr.,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SENSENBRENNER: Thank you for your letter regarding H.R. 1416, the "Homeland Security Technical Corrections Act of 2003." As you noted, §11 of the bill falls within the Rule X jurisdiction of the Committee on the Judiciary to the extent it concerns the two reports described in your letter. I appreciate your willingness to forgo consideration of the bill, and I acknowledge that by agreeing to waive its consideration of the bill, the Committee on the Judiciary does not waive its jurisdiction over this provision.

I will include a copy of your letter and this response in our committee report and in the Congressional Record during consideration of H.R. 1416 on the House floor.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,
CHRISTOPHER COX,
Chairman.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

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

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, I come before you tonight to talk about the Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization

Act of 2003 and to place it in context with the overall goals and beliefs of the President and the Republican party.

The Republican bill, H.R. 1, is quite simply a first step toward the Republicans' goal to privatize Medicare. My colleagues on the other side of the aisle want to do this for a couple of reasons.

The first is that they firmly believe that the private sector and the free market are always right and that government is always wrong. I am afraid that they have a very narrow-minded and simplistic view of how our economy, our government and our country are supposed to function.

There has been a shift in the rhetoric used during political debate in this country since the election of this President. There has been a conscious effort by his office and the Republican leadership of the House to use language that paints critical issues in simplistic black and white, us versus them, good versus evil, terms, ultimately simplifying the debate into a three word sound byte.

I view this as a very unfortunate occurrence because it allows a certain mental laziness to take over this body. When it is really our duty, it is our duty to debate, to discuss and to think very carefully and critically about very complex and important work that we do in this Chamber.

No one here has more respect for the power, the creativity and problem solving ability of the free market as I do. I am a hard-nosed, show-me-the-bottom-line businesswoman through and through, but my admiration of the market is based on years of deep study of its function and a real understanding of how it works.

My Republican colleagues, on the other hand, seem to feel that the invisible hand of Adam Smith and the hand of God are the same thing but our free market is not an all powerful system without limitations.

The free market is an incredible tool that has advanced many areas of human endeavor, but in order for it to work, it must include one very important ingredient, profit, and without this critical component, the free market system is useless.

Medicare was created in 1965 precisely to address the failure in this market. It was not profitable to treat our seniors with a free market health insurance industry so they found a solution to insuring the elderly. They just decided that they would not cover them. After all, old people get sick too much and insurance companies would have to pay. They figured that if you want to make money in the medical insurance game, insure young, healthy people, not old sick people.

Luckily for America, during the 1960s and 1970s and 1980s Democrats controlled this Congress and they were not satisfied with the solution that would push our mothers and our fathers, our grandmothers, our grandfathers out into the cold. So Democrats set up the government entitlement called Medicare.