

I think one of the things that we need to be smarter about in this country and which would also begin to lower that demand curve for the medical services and begin to affect the cost shifts upward each year is in regard to preventive medicines. We all need to be doing careful screenings, cholesterol checks. We should be doing the cancer screenings. I heard statistics today about the way that breast cancer is really spreading in this country. Breast cancer is a curable problem and one that is affecting, I think, 1 out of every 3 or 4 women. Mr. Speaker, if we will begin to do the screenings and the preventive medicines, we will find that long-term our costs will begin to deflate also.

The health savings accounts, we have already discussed how that can affect long term the cost of our medical care and the cost of associated insurance.

One of the things that we are wanting to institute in this particular bill is more competition.

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If we look at a couple of examples right now in the medical community of competition, I think Lasik eye surgery is one of the examples, also reconstructive surgery, the plastic surgery. Both of those elements have had competition introduced into their sphere in the last couple of years; and we have seen, I think, 30 percent decreases in the cost of those particular services. Competition is one of the important aspects of not only the American way of life but also in any free market enterprise, and we should see that always competition is never forbidden but encouraged, and it should be that way in our medical field.

The gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) mentioned that one of the most important things we can do to begin to lower costs of medical treatment rather than to see the constantly inflating and increasing cost of medical treatment is medical liability. Many physicians in my district talk about the escalating medical liability costs. Each year we face the prospect that more and more doctors are going to just stop practicing medicine. So instead of increasing the supply, we are actually decreasing the supply, which is going to give more incentive for prices to go up higher even. Medical liability is one of the most serious problems in day-to-day costs of health care and needs to be addressed. This House has addressed it. We feel like it is a thing that should be pushed on through the full Congress and sent to the President for signature.

I think, finally, the good doctor mentioned several times, and in good components, the cost of defensive medicine. Defensive medicine is not just in fear of lawsuits. Defensive medicine is when our doctors begin to prescribe more tests than should actually be done because they are afraid that they will be sued if they do not prescribe every single test that is available. Defensive medicine is when doctors begin

to order more rather than exactly which tests they believe are the right ones, which procedures they believe to be right. It is in that defensive medicine, that overprescribing, that overtreating that we find, as the good doctor says, \$50 billion worth of cost in this country alone and that one single step of changing that parameter in our health care costs could pay for, for instance, this Medicare prescription drug bill.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to make choices in this Nation that are expensive. In this particular case, this particular bill, it was the right thing because we have seniors who are having to choose between food and medicine. There is an immediate impact in this Medicare prescription drug bill which will give to our low-income seniors right now this year a \$600 card that is good for any purchase of prescription drugs throughout the rest of the year. Next year the same thing is going to happen. Those people at lower incomes, \$18,000 and below for a couple, will receive another \$600 card next year, which will be good to help them defray the cost of the prescription drugs.

As we look at the plan itself, we have a lot of critics who are describing the gap and being very critical of the gap in the pharmaceutical coverage. I will tell those people that are assembled here today that the single most important reason we did that was to be able to afford the bill. We did not want to break the next generations because we paid for full coverage for every single person in this Nation.

I have often explained that my mom is one of the people who experienced the gap. Her income and her assets are high enough that she will be faced with seeing that coverage up to a point and then a gap and then the protection for catastrophic coverage. I asked her what she felt about it. She explained to me that she understood why we were doing it. She explained that she had felt blessed in her life, that she would gladly pay more in order to make it where it is affordable for the next generations.

Mr. Speaker, those people who are being so critical of this particular aspect of the bill I think are being disingenuous. They talk about the cost of the bill on the one hand, while complaining about the gap on the other. I am sorry. They simply have to choose one or the other. They have to choose full coverage and the high price above \$1 trillion versus the \$400 to \$500 billion that we are facing in this bill as it stands. Either they choose full coverage and the higher price, or they give the gap in the lower price. We in this House and in the Senate and in the bill that was passed and signed by the President chose to allow those people to pay more who could pay more in order to make this bill more affordable for the next generations.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the President's calm and patient leadership on this matter. The President never

wavered in his commitment to provide coverage for those seniors who are not able to provide coverage for themselves. And I think that this House chose rightly in passing that bill, and I think that the seniors are finding that it is going to be one of the tremendous changes in the way that we present medical coverage through the Medicare program in this country.

I appreciate, also, the President's leadership in many other issues. We have taken on serious issues in this House, and we have passed them. Not all have made it to the President, but many have made it to the President. We took bold steps to reinvigorate the economy. The economy, as we understand, had suffered from three deep shocks: the collapse of the dot-com industry back in the ending years of President Clinton's term; 9-11 was the second big shock. The third big shock were the corporations that were acting improperly. Global Crossing is a good example. Enron is also an example that has been used. When those companies began to act improperly, people began to suck their money out of the stock market and put it into interest-bearing accounts at the bank. Those three shocks to our economy were ones that were very difficult, and many economies could not have sustained them. The President has patiently built our economy back with a series of tax decreases to the American public. Many of those tax decreases fall on businesses which are able to maintain profitability, increase their employment, grow their capacity, increase the capability of competing with those firms overseas. I will tell the Speaker that we have done magnificent work in many areas; and I appreciate, myself, the calm and principled leadership of the President, who has decided to fight this war on terror, to fix Medicare as he saw the Medicare problems to be, to deal with the forests that were burning up throughout the West, to pass the Partial Birth Abortion bill and sign that, to pass the AMBER alert bill and to get that signed.

Mr. Speaker, we have done magnificent work in this House. The President has signed much of it into law. But one of the most dramatic things we have done is to pass this prescription drug Medicare reform bill, which I think is going to make sure that Medicare is available throughout the rest of this generation and on into the future for my children and my grandchildren.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. BECERRA (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of personal reasons.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of business in the district.

Mr. EMANUEL (at the request of Ms. PELOSI) for today on account of a family commitment.

Mr. TAUZIN (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for the weeks of March 8 and March 15 on account of medical reasons.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. HINCHEY) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mrs. MCCARTHY of New York, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DEFAZIO, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BLUMENAUER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GREEN of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CUMMINGS, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. CARSON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HINCHEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BALLANCE, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. MILLENDER-MCDONALD, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mrs. BLACKBURN) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material:)

Mr. BURGESS, for 5 minutes, March 17.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana, for 5 minutes, today and March 17 and 18.

Mr. DREIER, for 5 minutes, today and March 17 and 18.

Mr. NEUGEBAUER, for 5 minutes, today.

Mrs. BLACKBURN, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HENSARLING, for 5 minutes, March 17.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida, for 5 minutes, March 17.

Mr. BRADLEY of New Hampshire, for 5 minutes, today and March 18.

Mr. BEREUTER, for 5 minutes, today and March 17.

EXTENSION OF REMARKS

By unanimous consent, permission to revise and extend remarks was granted to:

Mr. HEFLEY, and to include therein extraneous material, notwithstanding the fact that it exceeds two pages of the RECORD and is estimated by the Public Printer to cost \$1,372.

SENATE BILL REFERRED

A bill of the Senate of the following title was taken from the Speaker's table and, under the rule, referred as follows:

S. 2043. An act to designate a Federal building in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, as the "Ronald Reagan Federal Building"; to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

Mr. Trandahl, Clerk of the House, reported and found truly enrolled a bill of the House of the following title, which was thereupon signed by the Speaker:

H.R. 3724. An act to amend section 220 of the National Housing Act to make a technical correction to restore allowable increases in the maximum mortgage limits for FHA-insured mortgages for multifamily housing projects to cover increased costs of installing a solar energy system or residential energy conservation measures.

SENATE ENROLLED BILL SIGNED

The SPEAKER announced his signature to an enrolled bill of the Senate of the following title:

S. 1881. An act to amend the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act to make technical corrections relating to the amendments made by the Medical Device User Fee and Modernization Act of 2002, and for other purposes.

BILL PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT

Jeff Trandahl, Clerk of the House reports that on March 12, 2004 he presented to the President of the United States, for his approval, the following bills.

H.R. 3915. To provide for an additional temporary extension of programs under the Small Business Act and the Small Business Investment Act of 1958 through April 2, 2004.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

The motion was agreed to; accordingly (at 9 o'clock and 24 minutes p.m.), the House adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, March 17, 2004, at 10 a.m.

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ETC.

Under clause 8 of rule XII, executive communications were taken from the Speaker's table and referred as follows:

7171. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, APHIS, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Asian Longhorned Beetle; Quarantined Areas [Docket No. 04-002-1] received March 11, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

7172. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, APHIS, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Cattle From Mexico [Docket No. 00-112-2] received March 4, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

7173. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, APHIS, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Brucellosis in Cattle; State and Area Classifications; Missouri [Docket No. 01-015-1] received March 4, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

7174. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, APHIS, Department of Ag-

riculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Unshu Oranges from Honshu Island, Japan [Docket No. 02-108-2] received March 4, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

7175. A letter from the Congressional Review Coordinator, APHIS, Department of Agriculture, transmitting the Department's final rule — Blood and Tissue Collection at Slaughtering and Rendering Establishments [Docket No. 99-017-3] (RIN: 0579-AB13) received March 4, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Agriculture.

7176. A communication from the President of the United States, transmitting notification of intent to use funds provided in Public Law 107-38, the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Recovery from and Response to Terrorist Attacks on the United States, FY 2001, for the Commission on Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction; (H. Doc. No. 108-174); to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

7177. A letter from the Acting Assistant Secretary—Land and Minerals Management, Department of the Interior, transmitting the Department's final rule—Oil and Gas and Sulphur Operations in the Outer Continental Shelf—Revision of Requirements Governing Outer Continental Shelf Rights-of-Use and Easement and Pipeline Rights-of-Way (RIN: 1010-AC91) received March 4, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Resources.

7178. A letter from the Director, Regulations and Forms Services, BCIS, Department of Homeland Security, transmitting the Department's final rule — Eliminating the Numerical Cap on Mexican TN Nonimmigrants [CIS No. 2266-03] (RIN: 1615-AA96) received March 11, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on the Judiciary.

7179. A letter from the Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs, Department of State, transmitting the designation as "foreign terrorist organizations" pursuant to Section 219 of the Immigration and Nationality Act, pursuant to 8 U.S.C. 1189; to the Committee on the Judiciary.

7180. A letter from the Director, Regulations Management, National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, transmitting the Department's final rule — Eligibility for an Appropriate Government Marker for a Grave Already Marked at Private Expense (RIN: 2900-AL40) received March 8, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs.

7181. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule — Federal Tax Treatment of Benefits received Under the Smallpox Emergency Personnel Protection Act of 2003 [Notice 2004-17] received March 5, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

7182. A letter from the Acting Chief, Publications and Regulations Branch, Internal Revenue Service, transmitting the Service's final rule — Low-Income Housing Credit (Rev. Rul. 2004-16) received March 5, 2004, pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 801(a)(1)(A); to the Committee on Ways and Means.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES ON PUBLIC BILLS AND RESOLUTIONS

Under clause 2 of rule XIII, reports of committees were delivered to the Clerk for printing and reference to the proper calendar, as follows: