

Medicare law with the prescription drug benefit supposedly even comes into effect.

We should repeal the law, go back to the drawing board and come up with a prescription drug benefit that really helps senior citizens under Medicare, not this false and illusory drug card, the process which begins this week.

UNDOING HIDDEN TAXES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DELAY) is recognized during morning hour debates.

Mr. DELAY. Mr. Speaker, the only thing confusing seniors are Democrats trying to confuse seniors about their ability to prescription drugs through a discount card. I think it is unfortunate that the Democrats have chosen confusion and misleading the seniors and getting lower prescription drugs as available to them through the new strengthening and improvement of the Medicare system.

Our Members have been home talking to seniors. To answer the question how will seniors be able to choose, our Members are home helping seniors go through the system and choosing the kind of discount card and the kind of program that best benefits them, rather than trying to confuse them.

But, Mr. Speaker, I came here to talk about something a little bit different.

Mr. Speaker, every year for 1,000 different reasons, and all of them our fault, American families are squeezed by the invisible grip of hidden taxes. These are laws and regulations, all of which are well intentioned, that cost our economy billions of dollars, billions of man hours and millions of new jobs.

In addition to income taxes, customers and consumers are stuck with regulatory compliance costs, litigation costs, interest payments on the national debt, and governmental waste, fraud and abuse. And all of these are eventually passed on to unsuspecting consumers in the form of higher prices.

This week the House will take up two bills specifically targeting some of those hidden taxes. The first of these will be the Middle Class Alternative Minimum Tax Relief Act from the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SIMMONS).

This legislation will protect 11 million working families and individuals from the unintended consequences of the Democrat-designed AMT, a tax provision preventing the wealthy from dodging their tax liability through creative accounting. Unfortunately, many middle income families have so benefited from Republican tax relief in 2001 and 2003, that the AMT now considers them rich.

Now, while deep down many Democrats may indeed consider a family earning \$45,000 per year to be rich, the majority of the people in this country, and thankfully in this body, have a

more realistic view of 21st century economics.

The Simmons bill is the first step towards making sure that the AMT only applies to those people it was designed to cover, not working families just trying to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Also this week, Mr. Speaker, in the House we plan to take up the conference report on one of the strongest, most disciplined budgets Congress has passed in two decades. It meets our present and reemerging needs while holding a firm line on discretionary spending. By setting a course of fiscal responsibility even in a time of war, we are giving the American people an opportunity to grow our economy back into balance, thereby protecting them from any more hidden taxes in the future.

Mr. Speaker, for generations Americans have been saddled with taxes that are too high and a government that is not responsive enough. This week we will take two small steps toward solving both of those problems.

LEAVE NO CHILD BEHIND

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. MENENDEZ) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. Speaker, we teach our children that promises matter. And they do. So what kind of message does it send to our children when the President promises to leave no child behind but then breaks that promise by failing to provide our children the resources they need to get a world class education.

The fact is the President's budget cuts education funding by \$9.4 billion. That is \$9.4 billion less than the President himself said we needed to leave no child behind. So the only standard we are holding the President to is the standards he himself agreed to in his own education bill.

If that is not a broken promise, I do not know what is. Of course, \$9.4 billion is just a dollar figure. But to the children who do not and will not get the resources they need, it is much more than that; 2.4 million children will not get the help with math and reading they need; 1.3 million children will not have access to after-school activities, but will instead be sitting at home or out in the street without supervision.

Other children will be denied enrollment in Head Start because the President froze its funding. And tens of thousands of students will lose the grant work studies or loans they need to pay for college. These are the human costs of President Bush's broken promises on education.

He promised to leave no child behind, but then turns around and leaves millions of children behind. What kind of priorities are these?

We Democrats want to do what we all agreed, Democrats and Republicans

alike, is the right thing for our children: Investing the resources to raise student achievements in core subjects like reading and math; demanding results and accountability from our schools; making sure our students have up-to-date textbooks and technology; providing after-school programs for every child that needs them; ensuring access to Head Start; increasing financial aid to college students and simplifying the application process and forms; increasing the maximum Pell grant; doubling the HOPE Scholarship and making the HOPE tax credit refundable; expanding assistance to minority-serving institutions.

I know these things are really important because I began my career in public service as a high school student. I did not care for the education I received in my public school. I might have been young, but I knew that was not right. So I fought to change that. I won a seat on the school board and won the funding so that every student who would attend that school would have a quality education.

What we do here makes a difference in the lives of students. I know. The promises we make here matter in the lives of children. I know. And the level of our commitment to education will, in many ways, determine our success as a Nation in the years ahead.

I believe in opportunity, in personal responsibility. But without providing a quality education to our students, we will not have those things. And if America is going to compete in the global marketplace of the jobs and commerce and technology of the future, we need a workforce that receives the best education available, not one taught on a shoestring budget.

Today there are students learning in trailers, in outdated buildings, literally falling apart, with leaky roofs and without adequate heat, using outdated textbooks and crowded schools where teachers have to pay for supplies out of their own salaries. We can do much better than that.

America cannot and should not settle for second or third best when it comes to educating our children. To do so, we need to make the investment now. Unfortunately, President Bush and the Republicans made promises but we are failing to keep them. We Democrats want to make sure all the children in our Nation get the world class education they deserve. If you give us that chance, we will deliver that promise.

VALUABLE MILITARY CHAPLAINS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, there are rumors that were coming out of the Pentagon, rumors that I believe are extremely troubling. Outsourcing our military chaplains is a very bad idea.

This is not a new organization, Mr. Speaker. The Navy Chaplain Corps traces its inception to the Second Article of Navy Regulations adopted on November 28 of 1775 by the Continental Congress. This event occurred prior to the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, or the Constitution of September 17, 1787.

From the outset of the Continental Navy, due consideration was given to divine services and the placement of chaplains aboard ships. This Act provided a place for religion and chaplains in the Navy.

Additionally, the United States Army Chaplaincy was officially created by an act of the Continental Congress in July of 1775 upon the urgent request of General George Washington.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I wanted to come to the floor is because these rumors at the Pentagon I hope are nothing more than rumors because I cannot think of anything more important to a man or woman in uniform, whether they be young or old, than to have a chaplain that they feel very close to. And our chaplains wear the uniform. Our chaplains wear the helmet when they are in combat situations.

I would share with you, Mr. Speaker, just two paragraphs of a letter I wrote to Secretary Rumsfeld on April 28, 2004.

"Dear Mr. Secretary, I write to you today to urge you in the strongest of terms to reconsideration your decision to consider outsourcing our military chaplains.

□ 1245

"The service that they provide, not just to soldiers, airmen, sailors and Marines, but also their families here at home and overseas, are irreplaceable."

I also would like to share with you the last paragraph that I wrote to the Secretary: "One of their most valuable qualities is that they are trained by the individual service that they represent. These men and women are more than just priests, reverends, or rabbis. They are also soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines. How can you possibly justify selecting a civilian with absolutely no military experience to advise our troops in the field? Replacing the uniformed chaplain would be a crucial mistake. I hope you will consider these facts before you reach your final decision."

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to tell my colleagues that those of us on the Committee on Armed Services, both Republican and Democrat, we are very concerned about this. We have talked to the leadership of the Committee on Armed Services, our subcommittee chairmen, as well as our ranking member, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. SKELTON); and also the chairman, the gentleman from California (Mr. HUNTER), and I believe that we will come together as Republicans and Democrats in the Committee on Armed Services, as well as here on the House floor, to discourage and to deny the decisions, should one be forthcoming

from the Department of Defense, to outsource our chaplains. It is just absolutely unacceptable.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will insert the entirety of this letter to Secretary Rumsfeld for the RECORD at this point.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, April 28, 2004.

Hon. DONALD RUMSFELD,
Secretary of Defense, the Pentagon,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SECRETARY: I write to you today to urge you in the strongest terms to reconsider your decision to consider outsourcing our military chaplains. The service they provide not just the Soldiers, Airmen, Sailors and Marines but also their families here at home and overseas is irreplaceable.

The work of the military chaplain is multifaceted in that they serve the troops in the field but equally as important, their wives and families supporting them on the home front. The military chaplain, regardless of service shares a common bond with their fellow soldier in the field, regardless of their religion, they are brothers-in-arms.

This work is not new either. For example, The Navy Chaplain Corps traces its inception to the Second Article of Navy Regulations adopted on November 28, 1775 by the Continental Congress. This event occurred prior to the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776, or the Constitution on September 17, 1787. From the outset of the Continental Navy, due consideration was given to divine services and the placement of chaplains aboard ships. This act provided a place for religion and chaplains in the Navy. Additionally, the United States Army Chaplaincy was officially created by an act of the Continental Congress in July of 1775 upon the urgent request of General George Washington.

I would like to share with you part of a personal account that I recently received from a chaplain serving in Iraq: "Twice a day I go to the 'Cave' . . . the combat operations center, which is housed in a former palace, poorly lit and the hub of fighting the battle. I stand in the corner and pray for each person/position and those they represent. I don't know many of them, but God does. I pray for wisdom, strength, mercy, endurance and God's presence for each warrior, all those they serve or represent. I cover the Cave and the battlefield as I look at live imagery projected on the wall. I don't know how the Marines do it . . . but the COC is loaded with strake-looking Marines. The senior NCO's all look like NFL lineman. The junior officers look like marathon runners and the mid-grade officers look like NFL linebackers . . . the senior officers are lean, tanned and serious . . . deadly serious. The place exudes the warrior spirit. If you are a civilian I can't explain it and won't apologize for it. If you are a veteran you don't need to have it explained . . . the warrior spirit."

Mr. Secretary, you must understand, these chaplains provide so much more than spiritual guidance. They are counselors and confidantes to those who have witnessed first-hand the horrors of war. This service does not stop at the warfront; their fellow chaplains are providing the exact same service to those who mourn the recent loss of a loved one in this conflict. You need to understand the severity of this decision, their presence in the field, on ships and on base are necessities.

One of their most valuable qualities is that they are trained by the individual service that they represent. These men and women are more than just Priests, Reverends or Rabbis, they are also Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Marines, how can you possibly justify selecting a civilian with absolutely no

military experience to advise our troops in the field? Replacing the uniformed chaplain would be a crucial mistake, I hope you will consider these facts before you reach your final decision.

Thank you for your consideration, I look forward to hearing your decision on this matter.

Sincerely,

WALTER B. JONES,
Member of Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I close this way because all of us in the House know that we have men and women overseas serving this great Nation in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other parts of the world who have given their lives for this country.

I close by asking God to please bless our men and women in uniform and their families. I ask God in His loving arms to hold the families who have given precious children dying for freedom. I ask God to please bless the House and Senate. I ask the good Lord three times, please God, please God, please God, continue to bless and save America.

DISCOUNT DRUG CARD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BURNS). Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, President Bush is in my home State of Ohio, campaigning for maybe the 25th time. He knows he has to spend a lot of time in Ohio because of what has happened to the Ohio economy since George Bush has been President.

Ohio's lost one-sixth, one out of every six manufacturing jobs has left the State, some 170,000 manufacturing jobs every single month in the Bush administration; but as he travels throughout Ohio, he is going to stop in Dayton and do a little program, Ask President Bush, and the members of the Ohio delegation put a list of questions we would like to ask the President about the new Medicare prescription drug discount card that the gentleman from New Jersey asked about earlier. I would like to go through some of these questions, hoping, as we pose these to the President and wrote him a letter, that we can get answers to them.

We asked the President, is it true that the Medicare law allows drug and insurance companies offering discount cards to change covered drugs and discounts weekly? Does this not mean that seniors may choose a card one week and pay for it and be stuck with it for a year that will be worth little or nothing to them the next week? We ask, if seniors are guaranteed discounts that last as little as 1 week, why must they sign up for a discount card for the entire year and only that discount card?

The \$600 annual benefit will mean a lot to very low-income seniors, but this benefit lasts only 2 years. Many of the same seniors may be unable to pass the