

Many seniors and disabled Medicare recipients have been waiting a long time for Medicare prescription drug coverage. I am proud that this Congress has answered their call.

□ 1030

This discount card is just the beginning of more health care options and a greater quality of life for our seniors.

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE SHOULD HOLD HIMSELF ACCOUNTABLE

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this morning one of the military personnel whose actions were considered part of the horrific acts in the Iraqi prison stands for his court-martial. The words offered were a deep apology as members of his community indicated his service to his community, the kind of human being he was and to them still remains.

The reason why I rise is because his indictment and court-martial today does not in any way take away the ultimate responsibility all the way to the Secretary of Defense. Nothing I have heard from the Secretary of Defense commends me to believe that he should not go, and he frankly should hold himself accountable for the lack of procedures and lack of training and the lack of training given to these enlisted National Guard and others who came there without training, without resources, despite the fact that we all should know right from wrong.

Today, with the Defense authorization bill, nothing in the bill speaks to this issue; and this bill is wracked with problems because it does not address the tragedy in Iraq.

WE ARE BETTER OFF NOW THAN FOUR YEARS AGO

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, it really is a very good question posed frequently on the House floor today, Are we better off today than we were 4 years ago? Let us think.

Four years ago, we had a morally disgraced President in the United States of America in the Oval Office. Today we have a man of integrity, of virtue, of principle, of purpose.

Four years ago, the terrorists planned their attacks against America and our allies. Today, America attacks the terrorists while they cower in the mountains of Pakistan.

Four years ago, Saddam Hussein amassed weapons of mass destruction, the Taliban was in power, and Libya had a WMD program. Today, the Taliban is gone. Saddam Hussein is in a cell. We have found pieces of his WMDs, and Libya has ended its program.

Four years ago, the Clinton recession took hold. Today, last month, 300,000 new jobs.

Four years ago, partial birth abortion was legal in America. Today, that moral horror has ended.

We are better off today than we were 4 years ago.

PEOPLE IN THE 32ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT ARE NOT BETTER OFF THAN FOUR YEARS AGO

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I ask, Are we better off now than we were 4 years ago? Unfortunately, for people that I represent in the 32nd Congressional District, including the San Gabriel Valley in East Los Angeles, it is a resounding "no."

Nearly 20,000 people have lost jobs in my district. Unemployment has hovered from 9 to 10 percent for 3 chronic years. Thirty-three percent of the people I represent have no health insurance, and a good number of those people are young children under the age of six.

Yet the House Republican leadership continues to push for wealthy families' tax breaks.

This week, the House will vote on a bill that would provide new tax breaks to rich families earning over \$309,000 a year. Most of the people in my district do not make that much. They actually make anywhere around 20 and \$10,000 a year. People making \$10,000 a year would get nothing in this tax break, \$150 at the most, compared to those at the very wealthy end who will get more money.

We need to do better, and our folks are not better off now. Four years ago they were.

LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES ACT TO STAMP OUT PEER-TO-PEER CHILD PORN

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, on Friday several Federal agencies announced a national law enforcement initiative aimed at combating the growing volume of illegal child pornography distributed through peer-to-peer file trading networks.

Since last fall, the effort has resulted in hundreds of searches nationwide, the identification of thousands of computers used to traffic in child pornography, and the arrest of more than 65 individuals.

This action should be commended and further action encouraged, but Friday's announcement is a disturbing confirmation that peer-to-peer programs are being manipulated. They are becoming an ever-more dangerous platform used by child predators, some

convicted child molesters, to attack kids.

Parents need the ability to protect their kids before they are harmed by cyberpredators using peer-to-peer software. H.R. 2885 would give parents the tools and help parents prevent this from happening in the first place. I urge support.

DISCOUNT DRUG CARD IS A FARCE

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleagues on the Republican side talk about the discount drug card, so-called, that goes into effect June 1. It is such a farce.

First of all, there is no drug benefit. We all know that. They have postponed that to sometime 2 years from now, in 2006, when you will actually have to put out more money than the benefit you would get, so nobody would sign up for it anyway. But what a farce these cards are.

In my district in New Jersey, you can already get most of these cards. You do not even need to go through the Federal Government.

In addition to that, if you look on this Web site and it shows you that there is a lower price, well, if you look and compare with other Internet sites, the prices are usually lower in other Internet sites. You do not even need the drug card.

In addition to that, the price can change. Whatever price is on that Web site, a week later they can change the price and simply raise it.

In addition, my constituents have been complaining about how they go to a particular pharmacy, they will not even take the card.

I have never seen so much chaos. Seniors are disgusted by this proposal. It is just a bureaucratic nightmare. It gives them no discount whatsoever and no benefit.

REGULATORY BURDEN ON SMALL BUSINESSES

(Mr. HENSARLING asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HENSARLING. Mr. Speaker, as a former small businessman, I rise today in support of Republican efforts this week to reduce the regulatory burden on small businesses, the job engine of this country.

I know firsthand that the Federal regulatory burden strangles small business in America and keeps American-owned businesses from creating more jobs. In the year 2000, the estimated total regulatory burden in America was a job-crushing \$843 billion. Along with high rates of taxation, which Democrats want to raise even further, nothing stifles job creation in America like the heavy hand of bureaucratic regulation.

Small businesses that employ fewer than 20 employees pay almost \$7,000 a year in regulatory costs per employee. Instead of using these funds to create new jobs, pay higher salaries or fund new or expanded health care benefits, small business owners are forced to pay to comply with too many inflexible and Draconian Federal regulations.

Democrats are working hard to make bureaucrats more powerful. Mr. Speaker, Republicans are working hard to make American companies more competitive.

CALLING FOR RESIGNATION OF SECRETARY RUMSFELD

(Mr. CONYERS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I regret to come here this morning to again call for the resignation of the Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld. The pictures, the videos that continue of our troops humiliating prisoners in Abu Ghraib and the acts of retaliation by Iraqi militants, the graphic accounts of sexual and physical abuse that go on and on and on, this is not about the failure of some rogue elements in the military. Quite the contrary.

It is a part of the total failure of leadership at our highest levels, and I refer my colleagues to The New Yorker magazine article by the distinguished investigative journalist Seymour Hersh.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

(Mr. ROGERS of Alabama asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ROGERS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, relief from skyrocketing prescription drug prices is finally on its way.

Beginning in June, Alabama seniors previously without prescription drug coverage should begin to see savings of between 10 and 25 percent on their medications. For example, seniors who previously paid \$100 per month for one prescription could now pay as little as \$75 per month under this new 100 percent voluntary plan. These same seniors could now see savings of up to \$300 per year just on this one medication; and for low-income seniors, even more help is on the way.

Thanks to a \$600-per-month credit, 21,400 seniors in my congressional district should see an additional assistance with their drug bills. What is more, Alabama seniors will soon be eligible for important new features like diabetes screening and a free welcome-to-Medicare physical.

The legislation makes important new investments in our rural hospitals and clinics as well. These investments will help improve the health for all of our seniors, as well as all of our families and children.

TIME TO HELP SENIORS FIGURE OUT WHAT BENEFIT IS BEST FOR THEM

(Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. WILSON of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, on the first day that seniors could sign up for prescription drug cards, the discount cards, I went to the Barelbas Senior Center, and I sat down at one of the tables at lunchtime and chatted with a little lady and started talking about this new card that would be available.

She say, oh, I already know; I talked to AARP and I already have my card. She pulled it out of her wallet and she showed me, and it had the Medicare sign on it. She said, I asked the lady and I tried to use it, and I did on Saturday, and they let me use it, and I saved \$7.

It is not too hard for people to understand what these prescription drug cards will do for them; and when I talked to more people at the Barelbas Senior Center, they were very interested in the \$600 that can be added to that debit-like card to help them with the cost of their drugs.

It is time to put aside the bickering and help seniors figure out which benefit is the best for them so that they can afford their prescription drugs.

BETTER HEARING AND SPEECH MONTH

(Mr. RYUN of Kansas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. RYUN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the month of May as Better Hearing and Speech Month.

I am one of 2 million Americans who have experienced a hearing loss personally, but my hearing loss was the result of a birth defect as an illness that took place early in my life, and there are many who need help as a result of this.

Today, we are exposed to harmful levels of toxic noise in our environment and must be aware of these harmful sounds and do our best to protect ourselves from them so that we can avoid problems in the future.

One-third of our seniors have hearing loss. Eighty percent of these seniors have not sought treatment, and 75 percent of those needing hearing aids do not have them.

Left untreated, hearing loss leads to isolation, depression, and dangerous situations.

I introduced the Hearing Health Accessibility Act, H.R. 2821, to give seniors direct access to audiologists under Medicare. This would provide effective care for our seniors with hearing loss because hearing aids are expensive, and most insurance companies do not cover them.

I have also introduced the Hearing Aid Assistance Tax Credit, H.R. 3103.

This \$500 tax credit would be available once every 5 years to children and those over 55.

I encourage my colleagues to cosponsor these initiatives.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF CONFERENCE REPORT ON S. CON. RES. 95, CONCURRENT RESOLUTION ON THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2005

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 649 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 649

Resolved, That upon adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider the conference report to accompany the concurrent resolution (S. Con. Res. 95) setting forth the congressional budget for the United States Government for fiscal year 2005 and including the appropriate budgetary levels for fiscal years 2006 through 2009. All points of order against the conference report and against its consideration are waived. The conference report shall be considered as read. The conference report shall be debatable for one hour equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on the Budget.

SEC. 2. (a) Upon adoption in the House of the conference report to accompany Senate Concurrent Resolution 95, and until a concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2005 has been adopted by the Congress—

(1) the provisions of the conference report and its joint explanatory statement shall have force and effect in the House; and

(2) for purposes of title III of the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, the conference report shall be considered adopted by the Congress.

(b) Nothing in this section may be construed to engage rule XXVII.

SEC. 3. The House being in possession of the official papers, the managers on the part of the House at the conference on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses on H.R. 2660 shall be, and they are hereby, discharged to the end that H.R. 2660 and its accompanying papers, be, and they are hereby, laid on the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LATHAM). The gentleman from Washington (Mr. HASTINGS) is recognized for 1 hour.

□ 1045

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, for purposes of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN), pending which I yield myself such time as I may consume. During consideration of this resolution, all time yielded is for the purpose of debate only.

(Mr. HASTINGS of Washington asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HASTINGS of Washington. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 649 waives all points of order against the conference report to accompany S. Con. Res. 95, the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2005, and its