

minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I raise my voice this morning in concern about the new Medicare prescription drug card that took effect yesterday.

Last week, I visited numerous senior centers in my district to learn that many of those in my district are very confused because they do not have basic information about the program. The low-income seniors I met with are especially frightened because the information was not provided in their language, many who speak Spanish and many who speak Chinese.

□ 1015

There are 7.2 million low-income seniors whose needs are being ignored, yet the cost of medication is up 27 percent according to AARP.

Additionally, pharmaceutical companies and lobbyists spent \$2.7 million to pass this legislation. Plus, the new Medicare law hurts seniors because a stringent and complex asset test is now in place, prohibiting many seniors in my district from taking full advantage of this program. They are even concerned about their burial plots, that that is going to be used against them.

How dare we implement such legislation. My seniors ask me, Congresswoman, who is there to protect me? We voted for the Congress to protect us. Where are they when we need them? Who is looking out for us?"

ONE STEP CLOSER TO SOVEREIGNTY

(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, yesterday was a big day for Iraq. As The Washington Post reports this morning, "A diverse group of secular figures, political independents, and technical specialists was appointed Tuesday to serve as Iraq's caretaker administration."

As we come to the turnover of sovereignty to this government, we must keep in mind how important our effort in Iraq is. A free Iraq would be a death blow to the terrorists. For too long the people of this region have had no say in the direction of their nations. On June 30, we move one step closer to seeing a nation choose its own course.

The President has been a firm, steady leader during this trying time. He has rightly said that we have not freed Iraq to make them into Americans; we have freed Iraq to allow them to live in freedom. Iraq has the potential to be a great ally in the Middle East. Success there is critical.

THE ECONOMY

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, a moment ago we heard the majority

leader say that numbers alone do not give the full picture about the economy. Well, I could not agree more, with the spiraling deficit, more tax cuts for people who are already well off, the refusal of the President and the Republican leadership to fund the No Child Left Behind initiative, or ignoring the promises of candidate Bush to enhance Pell Grants, along with a refusal to tap unemployment insurance funds to help the long-term unemployed.

Americans understand that numbers alone do not give the full picture about the economy. But what I find, meeting with the long-term unemployed in my community, they are looking at misplaced priorities and broken promises; and they, like most Americans, do not like what they see.

THE NEED FOR AN ENERGY POLICY

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

Mr. COLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss the greatest threat to the economic recovery now under way, rising energy prices. Since 2001, the price for a gallon of gasoline has increased by 52 percent, U.S. oil imports have increased by more than 10 percent, the cost of natural gas by more than 92 percent; and Alan Greenspan has repeatedly testified that energy prices are the single greatest threat to job creation.

Mr. Speaker, to meet our growing needs and address these rising energy prices, this House has passed comprehensive energy legislation three times. All three times it has been blocked through legislative obstruction in the other body. This obstruction hurts America. To oppose the President's comprehensive energy legislation while calling for more domestic energy production and lower gasoline prices is hypocritical beyond belief.

Mr. Speaker, for too long America has relied on other nations to provide the raw materials for our energy needs. It is time for us to move towards self-reliance so we are not susceptible to the threats, blackmail, and production fluctuations from abroad. The Congress must move forward with a responsible energy policy. Voting "no" for the energy bill is not an energy plan for America.

NEGATIVE CAMPAIGN ADS

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

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, here we go again. Republicans cannot lead, so they attack the Democrat that will lead America. Here is the proof:

Through the last weekend, the President's campaign has aired 49,050 negative ads against JOHN KERRY, and that

is just in the top 100 media markets. 49,050 times the administration has tried to mislead America about Senator KERRY; 49,050 times the administration has tried to divert America from the administration's absolutely incompetent record on the economy.

Gasoline in Washington State is \$2.75 a gallon. I did not miss that because of the ads. There are countless more negative ads coming from the Republicans because they only know how to tear down, not to lead. JOHN KERRY will lead and win this election. JOHN KERRY will lead and build a stronger America. It starts on November 2.

Meanwhile, America, every time the administration turns on another ad, get up and go to the kitchen for a bag of Fritos. You will not miss a thing.

DRUG DISCOUNT CARDS

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

Mr. RADANOVICH. Mr. Speaker, never before have American seniors been able to go to one place to price, shop, and compare their prescription drug options. America's seniors are now eligible to receive a Medicare-approved drug discount card at their local pharmacies to save between 10 and 40 percent off the price of most drugs, particularly generics.

It is important to mention the Department of Health and Human Services is the authorized distributor of these nationwide-accepted prescription drug cards. Seniors should be sure that the cards they acquire are approved by the HHS.

Millions of low-income seniors will receive an additional \$600 on their discount card to help pay for prescription drug medicines. Any unused amount of the \$600 credit in 2004 will carry over to the next year.

The competition between organizations offering cards will also help drive down prices. It is time to afford the Greatest Generation the quality prescription drug coverage that they deserve.

JOB TRAINING

(Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ of California. Mr. Speaker, since President Bush took office, 2.2 million Americans have lost their jobs. Americans are suffering through the longest unemployment period in 20 years and the most dismal job picture in almost 40 years.

And what is the Republican leadership doing about it? Having the House vote on tired proposals for job-training vouchers that do not actually create jobs for the millions of Americans who are out of work. Unemployed Americans need jobs and benefits immediately so that they can provide for

their families. They do not need training vouchers for jobs that do not exist.

Democrats have offered proposals that will create real solutions for Americans. We have proposed a highway bill that would create 1.8 million good-paying jobs more than the Republican bill. Democrats have also proposed enacting tax bills that will keep manufacturing jobs here in the U.S. and end incentives for shipping jobs overseas.

Americans also need Congress to extend tax cuts for the middle class, such as a child tax credit, without adding to the deficit. These are real solutions that create new jobs for out-of-work Americans and keep existing jobs at home.

We should be voting to pass these meaningful solutions to unemployment in this country and not wasting our time on gimmicks.

BUSH ECONOMIC BOOM IS IN FULL SWING

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

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, in this past Sunday's Washington Times, the highly revered economist Lawrence Kudlow spelled out very clearly how President George W. Bush's strong economic policies have produced a sustained surge in the economy.

Mr. Kudlow rightly said that "over the past year, following the enactment of the President's tax cut plan, real economic growth has increased 5 percent with only 1.6 percent inflation. After-tax profits have increased 37 percent. Business spending on equipment and software has grown 12.5 percent. Since last August, 1.1 million jobs have been created. Spendable income has increased 4.9 percent, and consumer spending is up 4.3 percent."

Indeed, not since Ronald Reagan was President has our economy grown faster. There can no longer be any question what effect lower taxes have on the economy. When Americans have more of their own money to spend and invest, the economy soars.

President Bush should be proud that despite the battles he faced in making these tax cuts a reality, his vision for more jobs and a prosperous America has come true.

In conclusion, may God bless our troops, and we will never forget September 11.

PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY ON THE TAKE

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Well, the pharmaceutical companies have a friend in the White House. Since George Bush has been President, pharmaceutical prices

have gone up five times as fast as the cost-of-living adjustments for Social Security, five times faster than inflation, and now we have passed the phony prescription drug benefit under Medicare that provides these bizarre discount cards which put all the obligation on the seniors and none on the pharmaceutical companies.

They jacked up the prices of the most common drugs taken by seniors by up to 30 percent in the last year. Now they are going to give them a 15 percent discount. Just like the used car dealer, he jacked up the price 2,000 bucks before you walked on the lot, and then he says, I will give you a \$1,000 discount. Hey, what a great deal.

That is what is being done to America's seniors under the leadership of this President and the Republican leaders of this House who are in the pocket and on the take from the pharmaceutical industry.

DEMOCRATS' PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN WOULD COST MUCH MORE

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

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, we have heard all about the prescription drug card being available this month for the most disadvantaged, but there has been some discussion about how much this prescription drug benefit costs and whose estimates are the best estimates.

The Democrats are saying this program costs way too much money. But, Mr. Speaker, remember last year they introduced their own Medicare prescription drug benefit plan? Theirs would have cost \$1 trillion. Luckily, we passed a more responsible yet critical bill that offers prescription drugs for our seniors for a lot less than what the Democrats proposed. Yet in the last few weeks, the Democrats have been complaining that the Republican plan is too expensive and that we should take prescription drug coverage back from our seniors.

Let us not forget the Democrats support a candidate for President who has proposed a health insurance plan that would cost the Nation almost \$1 trillion. So there it is.

How come the Democrats complain about the cost of the prescription drug plan when they and their standard bearer want to spend much, much more?

STATISTICS ON THE STATE OF THE ECONOMY

(Ms. PRYCE of Ohio asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I would like to read a few statistics on the state of the economy.

America's economy grew at its fastest quarterly rate in 20 years, a posi-

tively sizzling 8.2 percent. Manufacturing activities have risen to their highest level in nearly 2 decades. Worker productivity is near a 20-year high. More folks than ever before own their own homes. Inflation, interest rates, and mortgage rates are near historic lows. Last month marked the ninth consecutive month of increased employment. The jobless rate is below the average for the 1970s, the 1980s, and the 1990s.

But one American out of work is one too many. So today, we will try to empower those who want to work by creating personal reemployment accounts to give these folks the help and the incentives they need to find jobs. Real help for real families, that is what this Republican-led Congress is all about.

REPUBLICAN PRESCRIPTION DRUG DISCOUNT CARD PROGRAM

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

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, the prescription drug benefit addition to Medicare, which was passed by the Republican Congress, Republican Senate, and signed by the Republican President, mostly over Democrat objections, has four aspects we need to remember:

Number one, this very popular program, endorsed by the AARP and most senior groups and health care groups, starts officially in the year 2006.

Number two, it is voluntary.

Number three, it reduces the cost of prescription drugs by approximately 50 percent after the premiums and the deductibles are met. It is about a 50-percent reduction, not as much as many would want; yet it is still affordable.

Number four, effective yesterday, June 1, many seniors, and those who voluntarily have decided to buy a prescription drug card similar to this, will enjoy a 20 percent discount on their drugs.

That means that my mom and dad, and yours too, perhaps, can start getting about a 20 percent discount on Glucophage or Lipitor or whatever prescription drug they need. All they need to do is dial 1-800 Medicare or www.Medicare.gov in order to see how they can immediately start saving 20 percent on their prescription drugs.

□ 1030

THE SHAME AND THE SHAM OF THE MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BILL

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

Mr. RYAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I find it very interesting that the other side has taken this opportunity to talk about the Medicare prescription drug bill. Two provisions the Democrats