

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

wanted to get in: one, reimport the prescriptions from Canada, drop the price in the United States of America and allow a free market competition; and, two, ask the Secretary of HHS to buy in bulk on behalf of the Medicare recipients, again dropping the prices. But the increased amounts of campaign contributions to this body has led to both of those provisions being absent.

The thing that Democrats are most offended about is not the cost. It is about the deceit. We were told \$400 billion this program would cost. Actuaries were told not to release the real figures to Congress, and the real figures ended up being \$140 billion more. That is the shame, and that is the sham.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 444, BACK TO WORK INCENTIVE ACT OF 2003

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 656, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 656

Resolved, That upon the adoption of this resolution it shall be in order to consider in the House the bill (H.R. 444) to amend the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 to establish a Personal Reemployment Accounts grant program to assist Americans in returning to work. The bill shall be considered as read for amendment. In lieu of the amendment in the nature of a substitute recommended by the Committee on Education and the Workforce now printed in the bill, an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of H.R. 444 shall be considered as adopted. The previous question shall be considered as ordered on the bill, as amended, to final passage without intervening motion except: (1) one hour of debate on the bill, as amended, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce; and (2) one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

SEC. 2. (a) In the engrossment of H.R. 444, the Clerk shall—

(1) await the disposition of H.R. 4409 and H.R. 4410;

(2) add the respective texts of such bills specified in subparagraph (1) as have passed the House, as new matter at the end of H.R. 444;

(3) conform the title of H.R. 444 to reflect the addition to the engrossment of the text of such bills specified in subparagraph (1) as have passed the House;

(4) assign appropriate designations to provisions within the engrossment; and

(5) conform provisions for short titles within the engrossment.

(b) Upon the addition to the engrossment of H.R. 444 of the text of each bill specified in subsection (a)(1) that has passed the House, each such bill shall be laid on the table.

(c) If H.R. 444 is disposed of without reaching the stage of engrossment as contemplated in subsection (a), the bill specified in subsection (a)(1) that first passes the House shall be treated in the manner specified for H.R. 444 in subsections (a) and (b), and only the other bill specified in subsection (a)(1) that has passed the House shall be laid on the table.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SHAW). The gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. PRYCE) is recognized for 1 hour.

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. SLAUGHTER), 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. Speaker, H. Res. 656 provides for 1 hour of debate in the House, equally divided and controlled by the chairman and ranking minority member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce. It also provides for an amendment in the nature of a substitute consisting of the text of H.R. 444 shall be considered as adopted.

Section 2 of the resolution provides that in the engrossment of H.R. 444 the clerk shall add the text of H.R. 4409 and H.R. 4410 as passed by the House.

Finally, the resolution provides one motion to recommit with or without instructions.

Mr. Speaker, 8 years ago, many of us stood in this very Chamber and passed one of the most sweeping policy reforms Congress has ever undertaken reforming our Nation's welfare system. We took a risk that day in 1996 in order to change a failing system that encouraged dependency and discouraged self-sufficiency.

The tangible results are clear. Since 1996, we have seen welfare rolls plummet from 14 million to 5 million. Thousands who for years found themselves trapped in a cycle of poverty today are holding down meaningful jobs, getting promoted, and saving for their child's education. It is time to be bold once again.

For the past several years, the tax policy we have enacted has created over 1 million jobs in the past 8 months, over half of those in the last 2 months alone. The economy grew more in the last 6 months of last year than it had in the previous 2 decades. That is remarkable growth, Mr. Speaker. But still more must be done. There are still many Americans out of work seeking meaningful jobs and rewarding careers.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that when we enact legislation that removes the roadblocks to progress, progress is achieved; when we eradicate programs which foster dependency, we foster independence; and when we create an atmosphere where workers can attain the knowledge and skills to build strong and successful careers, then we empower those seeking a job with the ability to find one.

That is precisely what this plan will do by creating personal reemployment accounts. These new accounts offer an innovative approach to provide unemployed workers with the very tools they need to get back onto their feet and into a lifelong career. These accounts are designed to provide unemployed Americans additional flexi-

bility, greater choice and more control over their employment search and to provide a reemployment bonus for those who find a job quickly.

Under this plan, an individual who is receiving unemployment benefits can access a personal reemployment account of up to \$3,000. The personal reemployment accounts will be administered through the one-stop career centers. These centers are already offering assistance to those seeking employment. At these centers, people can use their personal reemployment account for up to 1 year for intensive services like unemployment counseling, case management and job training. Supportive services like child care, transportation, and housing assistance are also available. One-stop career centers are the embodiment of compassion for those who have lost their jobs due to no fault of their own.

In the ever-changing, dynamic global economy that we live in, it is natural that some businesses are going to downsize, fold up or restructure, resulting in the laying off of workers. Most of these employees are honest, hard-working people. They want to get back to work, they want to earn their paycheck, and they want to support their families.

In addition to extending a helping hand to those seeking a job, this plan prevents fraud and waste as well, which is important to the program's participants as well as to American taxpayers. Currently, individuals out of work are able to take advantage of the one-stop career centers for free. Now they will be encouraged to shop wisely, paying for those services that they truly need out of the funds in their new accounts. This prevents double-dipping and ensures that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, effectively and efficiently.

But perhaps the best part of this reward-based plan is that individuals who access a personal reemployment account and find employment within 13 weeks will be able to keep the remaining balance as a cash reemployment bonus. They will get 60 percent of the balance at the time they are employed and 40 percent 6 months later if they are still in the job.

Mr. Speaker, this is a common-sense, innovative plan that will empower Americans to find new jobs. It is a plan that will provide out-of-work Americans with access to the resources they truly need: job training, child care, transportation services, or housing assistance, whatever that need might be for that particular individual; and it is a plan that reflects the Republican agenda of creating jobs and getting Americans back to work. I urge my colleagues to support this rule and the underlying legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.