

Yesterday, on the subject of the marriage amendment and D.C. gun-rights bill, the House majority leader said yesterday, "It is our job to make the laws in this country, and as easy as life would be for us if the most controversial bill we had to vote on was to rename a post office, that's not what we were elected to do."

I find the majority leader's comments almost ironic. I have done some research.

This Republican-led Congress, the 108th, the House and Senate, has been hard at work naming post offices. In fact, more post offices were named in this Congress than ever in the history of the Congress. In fact, under the Republican leadership, we have named an impressive 94 post offices, just three last night. We have also named 22 Federal buildings, passed 34 resolutions honoring athletic teams, introduced 35 resolutions creating commemorative postage stamps, recognized the Garden Club of America, recognized the importance of music education and authorized the use of the Capitol grounds for the soap box derby.

This is in stark contrast to when the Republicans first took control of the House in the 104th Congress. They only managed to name 12 post offices, compared to 94 this Congress. The 106th only squeaked out a pitiful three resolutions honoring sports achievements.

Without question, this Congress has proved that it is the most adept at naming post offices and Federal buildings, honoring sports achievements and conceiving of new postage stamps of any Congress in the history of the United States.

It takes a lot of time and effort to name a post office. First, you have to decide which post office to name. This is not an easy task. Then you have to pick a name, build support for it back home among your constituents and among your colleagues. The final test is to get a vote on the name, which is no small feat when you consider only one out of every 100 bills ever sees a floor vote.

However, in this Republican-led Congress, 80 percent of the post office naming bills introduced in the House have actually been passed. That is a record to be proud of.

But while we have spent all this time naming post offices, we could have been dealing with the problems some of the American people are facing.

While Congress worked on the backlog of nameless post offices, we have lost 1.7 million jobs here in America; median household incomes fell by more than \$1,500; household bankruptcies have sky-rocketed by over a third in the last 2 years; and health care costs are rising at three times the rate of inflation; and 5 million more Americans find themselves without health insurance, for a record 44 million Americans.

More than 1,000 Americans have been killed in action in Iraq. Reconstruction has been pushed to the sidelines be-

cause of mounting violence, and we have not found any weapons of mass destruction or called oversight hearings in this Congress about why we went to war on that premise.

President Kennedy once said, "To govern is to choose." Unfortunately for us and unfortunately for the country, this Republican Congress has made some very tough choices.

Time after time, the Republican leadership has been forced to choose between naming post offices and using its control of the House, the Senate, the White House and the Supreme Court to improve the lives of millions of Americans. More often than not, they chose to name post offices.

Please do not misunderstand; I am not opposed to naming post offices. In fact, I have cosponsored a few pieces of resolutions naming post offices myself. Congress should do these things, but we should not do it at the expense of other activities and other responsibilities.

We should not use it as an excuse not to deal with the health care crisis in America; not to deal with the higher education crisis in America; not to deal with the stagnant wages and income in America; not to deal with a war for which we do not have an effective policy and a President who does not know it is a burning morass, as three Republican Senators said just last week; nor should we use them as excuses for failing at our most basic responsibilities.

It is now past 7 months before we passed a budget resolution, which is a responsibility of Congress. We have not done it. We have only passed one of the 13 appropriations bills we are required to pass. We have not passed a higher education reauthorization act required by law this year. We have failed to reauthorize a series of laws. We have not yet passed the highway and mass transit bill which employs billions of Americans in good paying jobs and guides this economy, and yet we have taken the responsibility with precious time that we are here to name 94 new post offices.

Our Nation and economy rely on the most basic functions of Congress. Yet, this Congress, the Republican Congress, has failed on both. We can do better. Congress can name post offices and keep our Nation moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, election day is only weeks away. I hope, when Americans go to the polls, they will reflect on what kind of job this Congress has done. Republican leadership has made their priorities clear, and that is for new post offices and the naming of new post offices in America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HENSARLING) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HENSARLING addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from American Samoa (Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. STUPAK. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to proceed out of order and address the House for 5 minutes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Michigan?

There was no objection.

THE NEED FOR MORE RESEARCH AND MANAGEMENT OF RISK OF ACCUTANE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. STUPAK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STUPAK. Madam Speaker, I rise tonight to inform the American public on the safety concerns of Accutane. Accutane is a dangerous, powerful prescription drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 1982 to treat severe, recalcitrant, nodular acne that is unresponsive to conventional treatments, including antibiotics. Today, approximately 1.5 million prescriptions are written each year to hundreds of thousands of young people.

The horrific birth defects associated with Accutane are well-known and understood. The psychiatric effects associated with the drug, including depression, suicidal thoughts and behavior, suicide and aggression are less known and are denied by its manufacturer, drug company giant Hoffman-LaRoche.

Tonight, I want to share the results of a study that sheds light on these psychiatric effects. Dr. J.D. Bremner of Emory University recently completed a study which demonstrated that Accutane affects the metabolism of the orbitofrontal cortex, a brain area known to mediate symptoms of depression. If you look at this chart, Dr. Bremner had two PET scans, the baseline PET scan before the patient began Accutane therapy and 4 months into the Accutane therapy. Even my inexperienced eyes can tell the difference, and Dr. Bremner will present his findings in November to a convention of psychiatrists studying this issue.

For every question Dr. Bremner's work may answer, there are other questions that need to be answered about the psychiatric effects of these drugs. These scans show the promise more research can hold.

If you take a look at these, you can see there is a 21 percent change in the metabolism of the front orbitofrontal cortex. These scans show the promise of more research, and Hoffman-LaRoche has always denied that Accutane affects the brain. We know this is not true, as the PET scans show. This person had a 21 percent change in

their orbitofrontal cortex of the brain. Is this damage to the brain permanent? Only more research will answer this question.

I do not know why the FDA and Hoffman-LaRoche seem reluctant to look for these answers. The FDA has already determined that the link between Accutane and psychiatric events is strong enough to require a bold warning on the physician label and the packaging label for this drug.

The FDA should also re-examine previous studies submitted on Accutane. A 2001 review of three studies that were not disclosed by the drug company found the drug to cause an excessive serotonergic response and concludes that it should be noted that increased serotonergic function is presumed to be the mechanism of action of a major class of antidepressants or SSRIs, or selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors. In other words, Accutane acts like antidepressants in the brain so it couldn't possibly cause psychiatric effects.

We all realize the uproar that has been caused by the FDA when they would not allow their own expert to testify that antidepressants used in young people were ineffective and increased suicidality. The British came to the same conclusion, and they banned the use of antidepressants in people under the age of 18.

Just 2 weeks ago, the FDA finally declared that there is an increased risk in suicidality in children who take SSRIs. It has created a firestorm of debate about how safe these drugs are and how they affect kids.

Yesterday's Wall Street Journal had a story about the possible reasons why there is an increase of suicidality of children who take antidepressants. The story says, "One hypothesis is that, in some patients, these drugs have a disinhibiting effect," says one Wayne Goodman, chairman of the FDA panel that examined the issue in young people. "Children are already a bit disinhibited because their brains aren't fully developed." Remember, in 2001, Accutane studies that the FDA reviewed concluded that Accutane was like the antidepressants with its SSRI function.

The FDA must demand a full accounting of how these drugs, both Accutane and antidepressants, affect our children and their developing brains.

There is no excuse for allowing Accutane to be prescribed to hundreds of thousands of kids without, at the very least, continuing to demand answers as to the effect of this drug on the brain.

At the very least, FDA can begin to address the "off label" use of this drug, but yet the FDA estimated in 2002 that 90 percent of the prescriptions were written for "off label," meaning they were not written to treat severe acne unresponsive to other antibiotics.

At the very least, FDA can finally approve a mandatory risk management

plan to track Accutane's side effects and prevent thousands of pregnancy exposures, miscarriages and abortions each year. FDA advisory committees have called for stricter distribution of the drug and a registry of the patients to control the use of this drug. They have called for this twice in the last 4 years. Unfortunately, the FDA has ignored these recommendations, and the same failed policy and system is in place with this drug.

Last week, I and a few of my colleagues shared our concerns with the Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson about the lack of action on implementing these advisory committee recommendations.

The birth defects caused by Accutane are similar to those of thalidomide. People of my generation and older remember vividly the thalidomide babies of the 1960s.

Over 1.5 million prescriptions for Accutane and its generics were written in 2003, and clearly, Accutane has the potential to do greater damage, so why do we not have the same controls as we do on thalidomide?

Madam Speaker, my time has expired, and I will insert the rest of my remarks at this point in the RECORD.

It's no secret that I am no fan of the FDA's handling of Accutane or the drug company, HLR's, constant denial that Accutane does not cause depression or affect the brain—we know with this PET Scan their denials are baseless! However, I am appalled at the FDA's inaction on this registry. That's why in June, I joined with colleagues on both sides of the aisle and introduced the Accutane Safety and Risk Management Act (H.R. 4598). The legislation would create a mandatory program to manage the drug, and includes provisions to protect the health of patients and their children. To make sure we do not allow our children and their developing brains to be destroyed.

History suggests that unless there is strong leadership from Congress on this issue, the Advisory recommendations to the FDA will end up collecting dust on a shelf.

I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join me in cosponsoring this important legislation to send a strong message to the FDA and HLR that we will not accept their inaction any longer.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SUPPRESSING THE COST ESTIMATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, November 17 a year or so ago, just three weeks before the Medicare bill

was signed into law, President Bush said this law would cost \$400 billion. That is what he told the American public. That is what he told the Congress. Five months earlier, his actuaries in the center for Medicare/Medicaid services, the Medicare bureau, estimated the President's Medicare bill would cost \$534 billion.

I am not saying that the President lied about this, but it is pretty clear the President's people knew this bill cost \$134 billion more than it really did. Whether the President knew about it, whether his top aides told him, remains a question.

Now, the White House says, though, the bill will cost \$576 billion. It is bad enough that the President and Republicans in Congress advertised one thing to this Congress and to the American people and sold them on another. What is worse is the deliberate nature of this deception and tactics used to achieve it.

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But let us go back and look at this whole Medicare bill and how we ended up where we did, starting from the time the drug industry and the insurance industry met in the Oval Office with President Bush and wrote the bill. Starting with then and following through all the way until Labor Day weekend, 3 weeks ago, where the President announced a 17 percent, a record increase, 17.4 percent in Medicare premiums that seniors will be forced to pay.

First the bill was written with President Bush and Vice President CHENEY sitting down with the drug industry, sitting down with the insurance industry and writing a Medicare privatization bill. You know that it was written by the drug and insurance industry because the drug industry profits go up \$180 billion under this bill, that is \$180 billion with a "b," and you know the insurance industry was part of this because they benefit to the tune of billions of dollars in direct subsidies from seniors through increased premiums and taxpayers in increased dollar subsidies to the insurance industry.

Now, we also know that the passage of this bill was perhaps the most sordid spectacle we have seen in this Chamber of the House of Representatives in decades. The debate started at midnight, the votes started at 3 o'clock in the morning after most of the press had gone home and after most Americans had turned their televisions off. Normally, a vote takes about 20 minutes, but this took 2 hours and 55 minutes. There was arm-twisting on the House floor, when this bill was actually defeated, for the first 2 hours and 45 minutes. The bill was down 216 to 218. We also know that there was a Member of Congress from Michigan, Republican, who the next day told a radio station in Michigan that Republican leaders attempted to bribe him on the House floor with campaign money. We know