

top level of the executive branch arranging sweetheart billion-dollar procurement deals for the former employer of the Vice President, an employer with whom the Vice President has a continuing financial interest. Are we not even going to look into it? I guess, based on what I have seen this morning, it does not seem we are going to be permitted to do so, but we are going to continue to bring this to the public. They deserve to know, even if our colleagues on the other side are not interested in hearing it.

The Vice President has a financial interest in Halliburton, and it is, indeed, significant. The Vice President holds 433,000 unexercised Halliburton stock options, and even though most of the exercised prices are above the current market price, the majority of the options extend to 2009.

In addition to the stock options, Vice President CHENEY continues to receive deferred salary from Halliburton, and it is a significant sum. In fact, the Vice President's salary rivals his Government pay. He is looking at salaries that are very competitive to his Government salary. The Government salary is \$186,000, going to \$198,000 over a period of time, and the Halliburton salary is \$205,000. It starts out almost \$20,000 higher, and then it sinks to \$30,000 in the middle but creeps back to where it is a \$20,000 differential. Not much when we are talking about the kind of moneys Halliburton has paid the Vice President.

With these revelations concerning the Vice President's involvement in the no-bid contract, it is time for this Senate to act. In the last administration, someone would sneeze and it would be investigated around here. Remember Whitewater? That was a \$203,000 investment 15 years before President Clinton took office. Not only was there nothing to the charges, but it had nothing to do with Government conduct. Yet here we are talking about \$2.2 billion in taxpayer funds that were possibly illegally awarded, and we have done nothing to investigate it.

I urge my colleagues to uphold our constitutional duties and investigate this critical issue.

What does it say to the public at large if you want to overcharge the Government and you have the right connections, perhaps you can do it or perhaps you can arrange it. The fact is, people out there are sweating to make a living, sweating to pay their bills, sweating to educate their kids, and sweating to pay the prices that prescription drugs now cost. But when we have an item such as a \$160 million overcharge, in wartime, that is called profiteering, and in the war I served in a long time ago, World War II, profiteering would hold you out for scorn across this country. It never would be tolerated. It would be brought to the courts, it would be brought to the Congress, and it would be shut down promptly.

Halliburton's \$85,000 maintenance plan: Needed an oil change but bought

a new truck; \$85,000 was spent because they did not want to take the time out to change the oil in the truck. So they went ahead and bought a new one. What the heck, the taxpayers are paying for it, and no one is going to get excited here. It is obvious, as we see this morning and every day.

It is with regret that I bring this to our attention, but I think it must be done. I am not doing this for political reasons; I am doing this because the citizens of the United States are entitled to a fair break. I will tell you, if it were in the local hardware store, or something such as that, and they were overcharging you and not telling you the price in advance, we would hear about it in our offices. But, no, after all, this is only a \$2.5 billion contract; what is there to get excited about?

I thank my colleagues for the attention they have given me this morning, and I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. THOMAS). The clerk will call the roll.

The assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

I ask the minority leader, is he using leader time?

Mr. DASCHLE. I will be using my leader time.

MANY ISSUES NEED SENATE DEBATE

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I come to the floor again not to pose a unanimous consent request, because we attempted that again last night, but to remind my colleagues that we have proposed to our colleagues on the majority that we would be happy to agree to a unanimous consent that would allow us an up-or-down vote on the amendment that is now the subject of a motion to proceed. We had said we were prepared to do that last Friday. We had said that it is important for us to have a good, vigorous debate about the amendment, but now there is a debate among the majority apparently about several versions of the amendment they want to use.

Usually, when someone is in the majority, they come to the floor with a majority draft, hopefully a draft that has been passed out of the committee with careful consideration and thoughtful debate. That has not happened in this case. This amendment never came out of the committee. It was simply put on the calendar and now it is the subject of a debate on the motion to proceed.

Even with all of that, we said if they want to have a debate on that amendment, that is fine. Unfortunately, because the majority cannot agree among itself and because it has several versions that it now wants to present to the Senate, versions all to amend

the U.S. Constitution, and because, of course, we cannot be limited just to those provisions, there are other amendments that would be offered subject to a simple majority, amendments that could deal with any 1 of the other 17 amendments that are pending.

There are 67 different proposals for amending the Constitution currently pending in the 108th Congress. Any 1 of those 67 proposals would be fair game. There are many that have to do with gay marriage. There are many that have to do with flags, victims' rights, freedom of speech, campaign finance. There are a lot of amendments. We could be on amendments for the rest of this month. So this is not what I would imagine most people would prefer, but that is where we find ourselves today.

We are prepared to accept the unanimous consent agreement to go to the amendment that has been proposed to the Senate, but that is not apparently what our friends on the other side prefer to do. So we will have the vote on the motion to proceed.

The sad thing is there are so many other things that ought to be done. We were briefed just last week in a very sober setting in 407 about our circumstances involving homeland security and the possibilities of additional new threats to our country. Yet the Homeland Security bill languishes. There have been suggestions within our caucus to make a motion to proceed to homeland security, and at some point, I will say now that is a very real possibility that we will move to homeland security because the majority refuses to do so.

It is difficult for us to understand why we ought to be in this situation. This is the middle of July. We have yet to take up the Homeland Security appropriations bill, in spite of these warnings of new threats to our country. Why would we not take up that bill? That is just one of the questions, one of the issues, that trouble many of us.

The majority leader has promised to vote on reimportation. I do not know when we are going to take up reimportation. We are now through the middle of July. He has indicated that after the vote on the constitutional amendment we are likely to go to the free-trade agreements.

So I am not sure when we squeeze in a good debate about whether we can provide lower drug prices to seniors. That, too, could be the motion that could be the subject of debate on a motion to proceed. That is already on the calendar. The majority leader has promised a vote on mental health parity. We thought it would be January or February, then maybe March. Well, here it is now with fewer than 30 days remaining, and in spite of that promise there is no commitment to go to mental health parity.

Many of us would love to see a debate and a vote on whether we should negotiate lower prices with the drug companies for seniors.

That is on the list.

After what happened in the Supreme Court not long ago, there is a real question now about whether we ought to revive the debate on Patients' Bill of Rights. Patients' Bill of Rights ought to be the subject of debate in the Chamber, not to mention all the other appropriations bills, rail security legislation, legislation dealing with our borders, our ports, our railroad tunnels.

This continues to be a historic Congress in its inability to do the things the American people would expect of us. I have heard all the charges of obstructionism. They can't get their act together. That is the fact. They are unable to decide among themselves what their priorities are. As a result, the priorities of the Nation languish.

We face a real crisis, as I mentioned a moment ago, in our country, involving the rising cost of prescription drugs. Last year, Congress passed a bill that was supposed to solve that crisis. Seven months later it is clear that it is not working and prices are going up as fast as ever. We should not and we must not accept that.

We have an obligation to consider new ideas, to search for new solutions. President Roosevelt was fond of saying:

Take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly, and try another. But, by all means, try something.

A couple of weeks ago my friend Senator PRYOR from Arkansas was speaking here. He suggested that we follow a "do right" approach to our work. I completely agree. As we tackle issues, we should ask ourselves a simple question: Are we doing right by America? In the case of prescription drugs, I would ask the question: Are we doing right by America's seniors? The answer, unfortunately, is no.

According to a report by the AARP, the cost of the most-prescribed brand name prescription drugs has risen above the rate of inflation for each of the past 4 years, steadily eroding the fixed incomes of seniors. Last year the cost of drugs rose three times the rate of inflation. But as bad as that was, this year appears to be even worse. The AARP revealed recently that during the first quarter of 2004, drug prices rose more than 3½ times the rate of inflation and there is no end in sight. The typical senior will pay \$191 more for drugs this year than in 2003.

Statistics cannot do justice to the hardship this is placing on Americans.

Not long ago my office was contacted by a man whose name is Stan Pitts. Stan's diabetes has left him virtually blind and unable to work. Controlling his illness requires 13 different prescriptions. In all, his monthly drug bill is \$1,267. When he could no longer work as a computer technician, Stan went on disability, which paid him \$1,162 per month. It is not much, not even enough to cover his drug costs, but it still disqualified him from receiving any other assistance, including food stamps, housing, and Medicare.

There are no good answers for Stan today. All he can do is try to balance

his needs and his income as long as he can. If he does not take his medicine, his illness will worsen and he will eventually die. If he doesn't pay his rent, he will be out on the street. So he alternates. One month he pays for his medicine. The next month he pays his rent, and so on. This only delays the inevitable. Eventually, he will be evicted and eventually there will be nothing left to sell or exchange to pay his drug bill.

That is the future waiting for Stan Pitts, and it will be the future for thousands of more Americans unless we do something.

The White House and congressional Republicans seem content to rest on their Medicare and drug card program. Since its introduction 2 months ago, seniors have expressed concern that it is too confusing, it doesn't cover their medications, and it doesn't protect them against price gouging. The Wall Street Journal reported recently that whatever discounts the cards might have provided have already been factored into drug company pricing strategies. In fact, drugmakers have already raised prices so much that the so-called discounts offered by this program will do little more than return the drugs to their original prices.

Families USA recently concluded that families are worse off today with the drug card than they were in 2001, when the President took office. Furthermore, the official Web site established to help simplify the program for seniors has only made the problem worse. The prices are actually inaccurate. The information on the Web site is confusing and very unhelpful. Last week we learned that many of the pharmacies listed as participants in fact do not participate at all. Some are no longer in business and their windows are boarded up.

Seniors have been thrust into a maze of contradicting information. Even those who navigate it successfully will have few, if any, savings to show for their efforts. One couple from Rapid City who recently wrote me found the whole process, in their words, "foolish." They wrote:

This solution is not a benefit to the senior citizens, but instead is an economic boon for the drug companies. . . .

So rather than participate in the drug card program, they have started buying their drugs from Canadian pharmacies. They do not like to break the law, but they say they will have no other choice. The drug they need is 60 percent cheaper in Canada than it is here.

This family is not alone. Pharmaceutical companies charge American consumers the highest prices in the world. Some medicines cost American patients five times more than they cost patients in other countries. In effect, our citizens are charged a tax simply for being American. As a result, millions of Americans are having trouble affording lifesaving medication.

Seniors should not be made to feel like criminals just because they cannot

afford a \$1,000-per-month drug bill. It is wrong that seniors are left to struggle alone, and what makes it worse is the fact it is totally unnecessary.

The good news for America's seniors is we can do right by them. There are low-cost alternatives that dramatically reduce the price of prescription drugs. We know, for instance, that by enabling Americans to reimport medications safely from other industrialized countries we can bring down drug costs immediately. At the same time, we should be able to take advantage of the method the VA has already used to reduce drug costs, and employ the unrivaled purchasing power of the Government to negotiate better prices for 41 million Americans.

The administration opposes each of these commonsense measures. Apparently, the White House is so committed to protecting the profits of pharmaceutical companies, it is negotiating trade pacts that would increase the drug costs of other countries. Rather than running up the pharmaceutical costs of other countries, the administration should work with us to lower the price to Americans.

The fact is, there is no mystery to the problem of bringing down drug costs. There is no hidden secret; no puzzle to solve. We can do right by our seniors by making a simple choice. Let's put their interests ahead of the demands of the drug companies and HMOs. By taking simple commonsense steps, we can bring the cost of drugs and health care within reach of every American. When we do that, we will know we have done right by America.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, how much time do I have?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator has 7 minutes 55 seconds.

VALERIE PLAME LEAK INVESTIGATION

Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, last week I noted here in the Senate that it has been almost a year since the identity of a covert CIA agent was revealed in print by a columnist, Robert Novak. It has now been 365 days, 1 year, and yet we still don't know who blew her cover, who leaked her name, who in the NSC, National Security Council, CIA, gave this information to people in the White House. It is clear that Valerie Plame's cover was blown as part of an effort at that time to discredit and retaliate against critics of the administration, especially anyone who dared to suggest that some of the intelligence used to justify the war in Iraq was fraud or fabricated.

If the administration were to try to continue this campaign of vengeance today, I suppose they would have to go after the entire Senate Intelligence Committee. I believe its report that it just put out verifies the fact that this was done in a vengeful manner.