

representative democracy. In 1821, the Greeks continued this tradition by revolting against nearly 400 years of repressive rule by the Ottoman Empire and began their journey toward independence.

Greek concepts of government and freedom have had an immense and inestimable influence on the world. The world witnessed this as Greece, home of the first Olympics, hosted the Games once again in 2004. So March 25th marked a historic day for the world, not just for Greece alone. It is yet another day for all to celebrate the principles of democracy, freedom and self-governance.

Over the years, the United States and Greece have shown their commitment to and admiration for democratic ideals. Greece is one of only a handful of countries that stood by the United States in every major international conflict in the 20th century: World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, Desert Storm, and the Balkans. The Greek government responded to the September 11th terrorist attacks with strong political support, as well. The United States and Greece have formed a special bond based upon their shared commitment to democracy and freedom.

Today, the world needs to come together and stand on the basis of Greek principles to protect the human and religious rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. While this is an issue that concerns the Greek community, it is one that is vital to all communities. We must protect the rights of Ecumenical Patriarchate as Turkey has: refused to recognize the Ecumenical Patriarchate's international status and its significance of Orthodox Christians around the world; prevented the Orthodox Christian church from selecting bishops from anywhere in the world to become the Ecumenical Patriarch by requiring Turkish citizenship; confiscated Ecumenical properties since 2002; and levied a retroactive tax on the Balukli Hospital, a philanthropic institution run by the Ecumenical Patriarchate which treats thousands of patients a year.

We also call on Turkey to grant appropriate international recognition and ecclesiastic succession to the Ecumenical Patriarch, along with the right to train clergy of all nationalities.

Finally, the resolution calls on Turkey to respect the property rights and religious rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

From the history of democracy to the religious freedom and human rights of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, we share a common vision with Greece and all of her people. On this day, the United States of America and Greece stand side-by-side in our commitment to the principles of democracy, freedom, and independence. And I would like to thank the Greek people for leading the way and giving us the inspiration and strength to pursue these ideals.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, on March 25th Greece celebrated its 184th year of independence. I am here tonight to praise a society that represents, in a historical sense, the origins of what we call Western culture, and, in a contemporary sense, one of the staunchest defenders of Western society and values. There are many of us in Congress, on both sides of the spectrum, who are staunchly committed to preserving and strengthening the ties between Greek and American people.

In the years since Greek independence, Americans and Greeks have grown ever clos-

er, bound by ties of strategic and military alliance, common values of democracy, individual freedom, human rights, and close personal friendship.

The timeless values of Greek culture have endured for centuries, indeed for millennia. Four hundred years of control by the Ottoman Empire could not overcome the Greek people's determination to be free. But, I regret to say, Mr. Speaker, to this day, the Greek people must battle against oppression. For over 30 years now, Greece has stood firm in its determination to bring freedom and independence to the illegally occupied nation of Cyprus.

I also have grown increasingly concerned over the Bush administration's blatant shift in policy towards Cyprus that's become apparent since the Greek Cypriots rejected a United Nations reunification proposal offered by U.N. Secretary General Koffi Annan last year. I reject the belief that the United States Government should punish Greek Cypriots for going to the voting booth and concluding, rightly in my opinion, that the Annan Plan forced the Greek Cypriots to make far more concessions than Turkey.

I'm particularly concerned by comments made earlier this year by Secretary Rice in Turkey in which she stated: (and I quote) "We are looking at what we can do to ease the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots because, we, like everyone else, were disappointed that the Annan plan was not adopted. We have taken some steps, direct aid for instance to Turkish Cypriots, but there are probably other things that we should look at doing."

I shouldn't have to remind the Secretary of State that the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots derives from the ongoing occupation of the northern third of the island by Turkish troops and that our nations efforts should be concentrated on the withdrawal of these troops.

While the U.S. government should work to make the lives of Turkish-Cypriots better, it's simply unacceptable for our government to help the Turkish-Cypriot 'government' that continues to illegally rule the northern third of the island. The Bush administration simply cannot ignore well-established international law as a way to punish the Greek Cypriots for their democratic vote in opposition to the Annan Plan.

It's important that Secretary of State take a historic look at the Cyprus problem over the last 30 years when developing U.S. policy. It's important the U.S. Government not only look at the Cyprus problem through the lens of the Annan vote last year, but also from the perspective of three decades of illegal actions on the Turkish side.

I would hope that the Bush administration would then conclude that it's in the best interests of our nation to support a united democratic Cyprus, free of any Turkish occupation or any Turkish troops.

Mr. Speaker, I want to once again congratulate the Greek people for 184 years of independence, and hope someday soon we can celebrate the independence of the Greek-Cypriots.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

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

There was no objection.

THE MORE WE KNOW ABOUT THE PRESIDENT'S PLAN, THE LESS WE LIKE IT

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

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, during the Easter recess, our office sponsored a town hall meeting for constituents to voice their opinions on the administration's plan to partially privatize Social Security. It was actually held at a community college, at Houston Community College North-east, that is in our district; and we had both college students and senior citizens there.

One of the things that came out of that town hall meeting is the concern that Social Security is not broke; that sure, \$1.7 trillion of our national debt is, as the President says, IOUs from Social Security, and my constituents' concern is that if we are going to pay back the 40 percent of our national debt, about \$7 trillion, to the many citizens of foreign countries who loan money to the United States, why on this Earth would we not pay back the Social Security trust fund that \$1.7 trillion.

One thing that came out of that town hall meeting is that the more details they learned about the President's plan, the less they favor it. That might be why the administration has released so few details about their plan. What we know is the plan includes a proposal to allow taxpayers 4 percent or up to \$1,000 in private savings accounts that theoretically would yield a greater return than the government bonds on which Social Security is now invested. That proposal sounds all well and good until the American people, in our district particularly, realized that the private accounts would not alleviate any of Social Security's financial challenges.

The recent Social Security Trustees Report estimated the Social Security shortfall to be \$3.7 trillion over the next 75 years. But the proposal to create these private accounts or personal accounts will not help the bottom line at all. Even the President, before we broke for our Easter recess, admitted that "personal accounts do not solve the issue."

What the President needed to add at the end of that sentence is that the private accounts actually make the problem worse.

In the first 20 years of the President's plan, the Federal Government will have to borrow \$5 trillion to make up for the additional shortfall created by these private or special accounts. And, even worse, if you use the Social Security Administration's assumption, the administration's privatization plan would exhaust the trust fund actually 11 years earlier than currently projected.

Through this particular concern, several of my constituents pointed out that the creation of private accounts is voluntary, and that is true. That is, if the folks think that the market is too risky, they do not have to open that private account, and that is true. Private accounts are 100 percent voluntary.

But what folks have often heard is that the plan also includes the proposal to change the way the benefits are calculated. This element of that plan, called price indexing, would help pay for the private accounts and reduce the Social Security shortfall. But at the end of the day, the price indexing would result in a cut of guaranteed benefits for all beneficiaries, regardless of whether they choose to enroll in a private or personal account. It would cut everyone's.

So under the administration's plan, the private account is voluntary, but the cut in guaranteed benefits is mandatory.

Here is how price indexing works. Currently, benefits are tied to wages, which rise higher than prices, giving us an increased standard of living each year. Under the administration's plan, the benefit calculation would be tied to prices and not wages. Under this calculation, Social Security benefits that seniors would receive would replace a smaller portion of their paycheck before retirement. Currently, Social Security benefits make up 42 percent of the average wage earner's salary. Under price indexing, however, Social Security will only replace 27 percent of wages for someone retiring in 2042.

The picture is even worse for our children and grandchildren. I am proud to have a granddaughter who was born on February 1 of this year. In 2075 when she is 70 years old, her Social Security benefits would only be 20 percent of her wages if we allow this element of the administration's plan to take effect.

So in other words, price indexing lowers what our seniors get in their cost-of-living increase, and they already get so little compared to the cost increases with Medicare that they are having to pay. It is extremely important that the younger generation gets the straight story about how this plan will affect them. According to a poll commissioned by Rock the Vote, once young people learn about the trade-offs that come from private accounts, they will overwhelmingly oppose this risky proposal.

Among 18- to 39-year-olds, 63 percent oppose private accounts if it means that the Federal debt will have to increase to pay current benefits.

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Seventy percent of 18- to 39-year-olds oppose private accounts if they mean cuts in guaranteed benefits the private accounts will not cover.

Sixty-five percent of those 18- to 39-year-olds oppose private accounts if it means cuts in guaranteed benefits for all beneficiaries regardless of their participation in the private accounts.

With the effect of the administration's plan being a \$5 trillion addition to our national debt, a 46 percent cut in guaranteed benefits for all, this proposal does not sound like a good one for anyone, including the constituents that I represent.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky.) Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, I rise again tonight to talk about an issue that most Americans, particularly seniors, are more than aware of, and that is the high cost of prescription drugs, but, more importantly, the difference between what we pay in the United States and what people around the rest of the industrialized world pay for the same drugs. And what I have here with me tonight is a chart which shows prices of five of the most commonly prescribed prescription drugs, and what consumers pay for those drugs in London, and in Athens, and in the United States.

And let us look at the first drug, Lipitor, 30 tablets, 10 milligrams, and more importantly every single tablet of Lipitor is made in Ireland. Okay. So it is all imported somewhere.

Lipitor in London, for 30 tablets, effectively a month's supply, is \$40.88. In Athens it is \$55.65. In the United States it is \$76.41. And let me add that over the last year, we would have expected the prices, the differentials, to be diminished, because what we have seen is the decline in the American dollar of over 20 percent. But that is not really what has been happening. Let us look at some of the others.

Nexium, \$42.23 in London, \$57 in Athens, but \$138 in the United States. Prevacid, \$32 in London, \$39 in Athens, \$139.15 in the United States. If you take these drugs, Zoloft, Zyrtec, Prevacid, all of them, you add them up for a month's supply of those five drugs in London, \$195.95 American; in Athens, \$231.04 in American dollars. But here in United States, those five drugs total \$507.96.

Now, we have heard a lot of debate, and my colleague, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GENE GREEN), just recently talked about Social Security, what we should or should not do about Social Security. Frankly I think we need to get serious about reforming Social Security, because I think the system is unfair to our kids.

But the system that we have with Medicare and with prescription drugs is unfair to everybody. And while we have a problem coming out at us relative to the cost of Social Security and the generational unfairness that particularly our kids are going to face, the problem with Medicare is much larger.

And unfortunately, in my view, a year ago we passed a bill. We were told that it would cost no more than \$400

billion, which is still an enormous amount of money, to provide a prescription drug benefit under Medicare. Now we are told that the cost of that could be over a trillion dollars over the next 10 years. And that is only part of the bad news.

I think even worse news is that every single penny of that new entitlement cost will have to be paid by our kids, because it will have to be borrowed. What we really need to do, one of my favorite Presidents was President Ronald Reagan, and he said it best: Markets are more powerful than armies. We need to use the magic of the marketplace to help bring down the cost of prescription drugs in the United States.

The reason we see these big differences essentially is this: Americans are held captive. And if you have a captive market, there is no question that any free market company is going to use monopolistic practices. The net result is Americans are paying two to three times more for many of the drugs that they have to take to save their lives. This is wrong, and we can do something about it.

Many of my colleagues say, well, shame on the pharmaceutical industry. Well, they did not really make the rules. Now, they are certainly doing all they can to defend these rules that hold Americans captive, but this year Americans will spend over \$200 billion on prescription drugs.

Shame on us if we do not change the rules so that Americans have access to world-class drugs at world market prices. I am asking all of my colleagues to cosponsor the Pharmaceutical Market Access Act of 2005. We have over 70 sponsors now in the House; we have a growing list of sponsors in the Senate. You can get information on my Website at gil.house.gov.

But really we should be willing to subsidize people in sub-Saharan Africa in terms of the cost of prescription drugs. We should not be required to subsidize the starving Swiss. Please join me in sponsoring the Pharmaceutical Market Access Act of 2005.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. MALONEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

EXCHANGE OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to claim the time of the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MALONEY).

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

There was no objection.