

So I hope my colleagues will join me. Go to my Web site at gil.house.gov; there is a lot of information there. We have about 70 sponsors right now; we would like to get that to 220. Please join me in the Pharmaceutical Market Access Act of 2005.

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. 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 Florida?

There was no objection.

PRIORITIES: VETERANS, BANKRUPTCY, AND THE ESTATE TAX

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

Ms. CORRINE BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to comment on the Republicans' priorities. Many of them talk about protecting veterans and making sure that veterans have the support they need when they return from protecting this country's freedom in Iraq.

Today the House passed H.R. 8 to make permanent the repeal of the estate tax. This bill will cost the American taxpayers \$295 billion over the next 10 years. The cost on the first 2 years could go as high as \$1 trillion.

This bill gives a tax break to the wealthiest three-tenths of 1 percent of estates, while imposing a new capital gains tax on most of us, including small business owners and farmers. At the same time, the Republicans passed a budget that calls for \$800 million in cuts to the VA over the next 5 years.

Clearly, the Republicans are attempting to balance the budget on the backs of the veterans.

Tomorrow, this same House will vote on bankruptcy legislation that does not protect our veterans. Many of our servicemembers, especially the citizen soldiers of the Guard and the Reserve forces, face terrible financial problems because they do not qualify for a narrow protection of debt incurred while on duty if S. 256 becomes law.

Since 9/11, approximately half a million Reservists and Guardsmen have been called to active duty, some more than once. Hundreds of thousands of Reservists and National Guardsmen are currently activated in support of the ongoing military operations. According to the National Guard, four out of 10 members of the National Guard and Reservist forces lose income when they

leave their civilian jobs for active duty.

The people of this country need to see what policies the Republicans actually vote for. They talk the talk very well, but they do not walk the walk or roll the roll for our veterans who have sacrificed their bodies for this Nation.

Today, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EVANS), our ranking member, filed a bill for mental health for our veterans. It is clear that they are slipping through the cracks, and we need to focus our attention on how to assist veterans returning from the war, whether it is economic, whether it is health care, or whether it is to make sure that they have their jobs and have a seamless transition.

We need to do more than talk the talk. We need to make sure that our money follows all of this rhetoric we have on the floor constantly about how we support the veterans. It should not be just talk, but it should be our actions.

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.)

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to give my Special Order at this time.

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

There was no objection.

TOUGH ISSUES FACING LOUISIANA FARMERS

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

Mr. BOUSTANY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the farming community of southwest Louisiana. During the March district work period, I held community meetings in all eight parishes of my district to discuss issues facing my constituents. At each meeting, farmers and their families filled the rooms to ask for help.

Farming in Louisiana is not just a job for these men and women, Mr. Speaker. They love the land that they work, and they want to ensure that their livelihood is preserved for generations to come, but they are struggling to survive. Unless Congress can come to their aid, these farmers may not be in business by the end of the year.

Let me give some examples. Steve Broussard is a banker in my district and Steve works with farm loans for local growers, and he told me four rice farmers in our district have been forced to quit already this year. By the end of

this season, eight more could be out of business. For a rural community, farms are the foundation of a local economy. The closure of a single farm means the loss of a customer for many local businesses and a reduction of revenue for schools, public utilities, and hospitals in these communities.

Cindy Lahaye works in a hospital in Mamou, Louisiana; and Cindy told me that in this town of 3,500, they are feeling the ripple effect at their rural hospital because the surrounding farming community cannot afford health care at this time. This is a problem that begins with our farmers and affects every one of us.

In my recent conversations, I asked my constituents for input and suggestions on what could be done to provide relief for our farming community. First and foremost, Mr. Speaker, we must reopen important markets that have been closed for various political reasons. I had a farmer in Ville Platte, Louisiana, who told me, I have bins full of rice, but I am broke. Bumper crops in the past few years have caused prices to drop, and with a new crop going into the field, there is no place to move the surpluses from the past 2 years. Iraq, Iran, and Cuba were all some of the largest importers of U.S. rice, and all three of these export markets remain restricted.

Cuba, for example, had resumed importing agricultural commodities from U.S. farmers because of the provisions in the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000. A recent ruling by the Office of Foreign Assets Control threatens to derail this re-emerging market. My colleague from Missouri has introduced a bill that could provide immediate relief for the rice farmers of my district. H.R. 1339 amends the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000 to clarify allowable payment terms for sales of agricultural commodities and products to Cuba.

□ 1800

I am proud to cosponsor this bill, and I pledge my support for this legislation.

Secondly, taxpayer dollars dedicated to the United States Agency for International Development and the PL 480 program should be used to purchase U.S. commodities and not foreign food. The program serves two purposes. One, it provides emergency and non-emergency food aid to countries in need; and, secondly, the program helps American farmers since the money is used to purchase American agricultural products.

Wynn Watkins of Jefferson Davis Parish, Mr. Speaker, told me this. Congressman BOUSTANY, he said, all we have here is rice. It is the busiest time of the year for us, and we all came out of our fields to hear you speak today. We are being asked to send our boys to Iraq and Iraq cannot take our rice. Where is the justice in that? I agree with Wynn Watkins, Mr. Speaker.

USAID's budget proposal would transfer \$300 million of the agency's \$1.2 billion of food aid funding for 2006, and the transferred funds would be used to purchase foreign food for emergency relief. As a member of the Committee on Agriculture, I am opposed to this transfer.

Third, we need to improve the counter cyclical payment process. A higher-than-expected final price for rice in 2004 significantly reduced last year's payments. Many farmers mistakenly based their budgets and capital investments on information found on the National Agriculture Statistics Service Web site. The number had not been adjusted for 3 months, and the USDA and the NASS need to reform their calculation and communication strategies to avoid future such incidents. I have asked Secretary Johanns to look into this, and I urge him to be flexible with the farmers who must repay these advances.

Fourth, rising fuel prices and the surging cost of fertilizer have nearly doubled the cost of production for the farmers in my district. We must pass a long-term, comprehensive energy policy. Abundant, affordable and reliable energy is critical, critical to the success of our agriculture industry.

And, finally, we must honor the promises made to our farmers in the 2002 farm bill. Larry Sarver, from Crowley, Louisiana, told me that in 2002 he had a 6-year agreement with the Federal Government and he made budget and capital investment decisions. We need to protect this farm bill.

RISING PHARMACEUTICAL PRICES

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, my colleague, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT) was up here a moment ago talking about the price of pharmaceutical products and how they have been rising and increasing and ever going up, three, four times the rate of inflation.

There was this report done by AARP the other day that was covered in USA Today and on the news about how pharmaceutical prices had in the last year gone up close to about three times the rate of inflation.

The truth is, over the last 5 or 6 years pharmaceutical products have gone up somewhere close to four times, three times the rate of inflation. And every one of us know people in our district who go to get their prescriptions filled. They got them last month or they got them 2 months ago, same pills, same amount of dosage, nothing different, and the price is up 40 bucks. And there is nothing to explain how that went up \$40. And senior citizens who are on a fixed income, families who are on a fixed income and they have a sick child cannot afford a health

care cost that is rising close to three times or four times the rate of inflation.

Now, last Congress, Democrats and Republicans came together, not because it was a Democratic idea or not because it was a Republican idea, because it was the right idea, to offer reimportation of pharmaceutical products, allowing people to go to Canada and go to Europe to buy pharmaceutical products that are 50 percent cheaper than they are here in the United States, or go to England, go to Ireland.

All over Europe and Canada the same drugs that we find on our shelves at our local pharmacy are 50 or 40 percent or 60 percent, depending on what you want, cheaper than they are here. I have on my Web site in my congressional office a Costco in Chicago and a Costco in Toronto. And the same Costco, we compared the same pharmaceutical products most used by senior citizens for arthritis, blood pressure, other types of medications they need. And the Costco in Canada offers, on average, 52 percent savings for the same products that you could buy at Costco in Chicago.

We are separated by a little over 200 miles. But they saved 50 percent on their needs of their medications, whether it is Lipitor or other type of products. And why? Because it is the only product in this country that is a closed market, forcing American consumers to pay a 50 percent premium for the products that their dollars spent paid for the research.

We developed those drugs here in this country. We gave a tax credit to these companies to develop those pharmaceutical products, and we have the dubious honor to pay a 50 percent premium over Canada and Europe. So what has happened is that the American senior citizens, the American taxpayers, are subsidizing the poor, starving French and German and Swiss and Dutch. We have got to come to an end to this and allow people to have the access to the free market.

We are going to negotiate and discuss China trade, other types of trade deals where everybody here is going to talk about free trade except for one product. What? Pharmaceutical products, the product on which the United States pays more than it does on television, more than it does on consumer electronics, more than it does on food, more than it does in other areas. Why? Because we have a closed market.

What we are trying to do, Democrats and Republicans are trying to allow the principles of the free market to work, bringing competition and choice to bear. If you did that, then the American consumer and taxpayers would see a dramatic drop in their prices. And we are not being allowed to vote on that. Why? Because the pharmaceutical industry is giving you the best government they can buy. They have stopped us and the ability to bring that vote. If we did, we would pass that vote here. We would pass it in the Senate.

But the American people are on to what is happening. They know that we need to deal with this because we cannot continue to subsidize the rest of the world, both on the research side and on the price side; and that is what is happening.

We know it is safe because over a million seniors a year go over the border to Canada. We turn them into illegal drug runners. Go over the border to Canada and a billion dollars worth of trade and get their pharmaceutical products, and not one of them has ever gotten sick.

But what we are talking about is bringing Canadian cattle that we know is tainted, some of it, with mad cow disease. Now that we allow in. Accessing pharmaceutical products in Canada, Lipitor, other drugs on the Canadian market that is 50 percent cheaper, that is against the law. That policy has been brought to you by the United States government.

It is time to allow Democrats and Republicans to come together to bring common sense policies and the principles in government to work. Principles in business, businesses always allow competition. They find the cheapest price they can. We can get cheap prices and stop having the taxpayer subsidize too high a price.

My colleague, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT), and I have introduced this legislation. Other Democrats and Republicans are on it. And, again, it is not about politics. It is not about partisanship. In the last Congress, 88 Republicans and 153 Democrats came together, passed it, not once, not twice but three times. We will do it against this year.

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

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

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mrs. BIGGERT. 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 Illinois?

There was no objection.

IN RECOGNITION OF HERMANN A. GRUNDER

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

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a man whose spirit and dedication to the world of science inspired him to give more than four decades of tireless service to the Nation as a scientist, administrator and a leader.