

It is important that all of us in the Senate and the Congress and, of course, the President, continue to let the American people know that the Social Security system, as it is designed today, needs some changes if it is going to be there for tomorrow's workers. But we also need to reassure them that these changes actually create a more secure and a stronger Social Security system than we have today.

As we have already said, the seniors of today, those near retirement, will not be affected, but younger workers for the first time will have the opportunity to actually save what they are putting into Social Security. This is an opportunity for a generation, for us in Congress to save Social Security, strengthen it, and make every American worker a saver/investor. This is an opportunity of which I want to be a part.

Thank you, Mr. President. I yield the floor.

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, before the Senator from South Carolina leaves the floor, I know this is his first major policy address. I think he has addressed the Senate before on another subject, but this is his first address.

I would just like to say to the junior Senator from South Carolina that I have already learned that there is no one in this body, whether they have been here a while or just gotten here, who knows any more about the Social Security subject than the Senator from South Carolina.

Mr. President, we need that expertise. This is an extraordinarily important debate. I thank him for his support and contribution.

Mr. DEMINT. I thank the Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I am happy to be in the Chamber. I recall 4 years ago when I gave my first speech in the Senate, and I realize my colleague from South Carolina has given a lot of speeches over in the House of Representatives at the other end of this building, but it was a good day for me 4 years ago, and I suspect it is a special day for everyone involved.

It is a great pleasure to know the Senator, and I look forward to working with him. I welcome the Senator to the Senate and congratulate him on his maiden speech.

Mr. DEMINT. I thank the Senator.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. DEMINT). The Senator from Louisiana is recognized.

WORKING FOR THE PEOPLE OF LOUISIANA AND THE UNITED STATES

Mr. VITTER. Mr. President, what a difference a day makes. At this time yesterday I was riding in a Mardi Gras parade with my wife Wendy and four young children throwing beads and toys to throngs of young revelers. Today I stand on the floor of the Senate to participate in one of its many

great traditions by delivering my maiden speech—a contrast to be sure but perhaps a fitting segue since both exercises are about a wonderfully unique place called Louisiana and particularly the great faces and high hopes of its children.

As I begin, I wish to express to my new Senate colleagues what an enormous privilege and honor it is to serve with them. From our most senior Member, the senior Senator from West Virginia, to our youngest, the junior Senator from New Hampshire—I missed that mark by 3 years, by the way—this body is filled with bright, talented, and passionate men and women who care deeply about our country. And, of course, this includes the senior Senator from Louisiana, Ms. LANDRIEU, who honors me with her presence in the Chamber today. I look forward to working with each and every one of you, always putting country above party, people above politics. That doesn't mean we will always agree, of course. In fact, it may mean my words and actions will be particularly spirited and passionate, but that is only because of the sincerity and urgency I bring to an important job in important times.

There is also one even greater honor than serving with you which I want to acknowledge, and that is being chosen to serve by the wonderful people of Louisiana.

The media and pundits put great emphasis on my being the first Republican Senator from Louisiana since Reconstruction—or in 121 years. Put another way, I am the first Louisiana Republican popularly elected to the Senate in history. I think the people of Louisiana were very focused on making history in my election but in a very different way that had nothing to do with narrow partisan politics. They responded to my call to make history by lowering prescription drug prices dramatically; by expanding choice and access to affordable health care through empowering patients and their doctors, not Government or insurance company bureaucrats; by doing the difficult but necessary work to create great jobs in Louisiana, such as fighting corruption and cronyism and demanding standards and accountability in education; by forging a Federal commitment to save a unique national treasure, the quickly disappearing Louisiana coast; by truly honoring our seniors with true Social Security that the politicians can't touch.

This is the history Louisiana citizens voted to make, and this is the history I am committed to help forge. This is why my first legislative action as a Senator was to introduce the Pharmaceutical Market Access Act of 2005, to put affordable prescription drugs within reach of all Americans.

Now, I have to say this was not an easy first action. Clearly, this bill is opposed by some very powerful interests in Washington such as the big drug companies. It is opposed by the admin-

istration and was not particularly welcomed by any leadership in Congress, Senate or House, Republican or Democrat. But I could not ignore the wishes of a vast majority of Louisiana citizens.

As I travelled throughout Louisiana over the past year, I heard countless seniors in particular tell similar stories about the outrageous costs of their prescription drugs and how it burdens their lives. The United States is the world's largest market for pharmaceuticals. Yet we pay the world's highest prices. American seniors alone will spend \$1.8 trillion on prescription drugs over the next decade. Meanwhile, citizens of virtually every other industrialized country pay significantly lower prices, lower by 30 percent or more. And this includes many countries which are not dominated by old-fashioned statist price control regimes.

My bill would make prescription drugs more affordable by expanding free trade and world commerce, by legalizing the importation of prescription drugs from 25 industrialized countries with pharmaceutical structures equivalent or superior to our own. For the first time, individual consumers would be allowed to legally import prescription drugs for their personal use.

Critics of drug importation cite safety as their primary concern. I share a belief that the safety of prescription drugs is paramount. My bill takes steps to address real safety concerns and strengthen existing laws by adding new requirements to promote the safety of prescription drugs here at home and those brought in from abroad. It includes new requirements that imported prescription drugs be packaged and shipped using state-of-the-art counterfeit-resistant technologies or be carefully tested for authenticity before entering commerce in our country.

Drug importation is not a conservative or liberal issue. It is not a Democrat or Republican issue. It is a universal issue and challenge to provide our Nation's consumers access to safe and affordable drugs. That is why I worked to assemble a coalition of Senators and Representatives from across the political spectrum in support of this legislation. This coalition makes the bill unique as the first bipartisan and bicameral drug importation proposal. It is the companion bill to that offered by Representative GUTKNECHT in the House. An earlier version of the Gutknecht bill, of course, passed the House last Congress with my strong support and vote and stands as the only bill ever to pass either body on this subject. I look forward to working with all of my new Senate colleagues to advance this crucial fight. And, of course, my door is always open to those who want to join our effort or who have other ideas on how to bring the high cost of prescription drugs down to an affordable level. This issue is too important for us not to act.

In addition to lowering the price of prescription drugs, I look forward to

working with my Senate colleagues to take on other crucial challenges. I will be an active participant in the Social Security debate because we have a duty to the American people to ensure that their Social Security money is protected, not just for the current generation of retirees but for future generations as well. That is why I introduced my version of the Social Security lockbox last week and why I support the innovative idea of secure personal retirement accounts.

This week I will participate in the debate on class action reform in support of the Senator from Iowa, and I am hopeful we will not stop here. In the near future the Senate needs to address the problem of frivolous lawsuits that are driving more and more doctors out of business and robbing so many rural communities of access to the most basic health care.

I will also keep up the fight against Louisiana corruption and cronyism that still costs us jobs back home. As the folks back home know, I have gotten a few scars from this battle in the past but that is OK; I am ready to continue this fight in the Senate because it is a fight about doing right by Louisiana.

I look forward to working with Senator LANDRIEU on key Louisiana projects that will protect and strengthen our Louisiana economy. By working together we will be able to secure the funding needed to preserve our coast, finish the construction of I-49, and protect our State's vital military installations.

Every morning that I wake up at home in Louisiana, I help my wife Wendy get our four children up and ready for school and for life. Then I view what flows naturally from that. I look for new ideas and innovative avenues to improve the lives of every child in Louisiana. And now in doing so I look for new ways to work with every Member of this great body to build that brighter future.

Mr. President, I thank you and I yield the floor.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I say briefly to the junior Senator from Louisiana, thank you for a marvelous opportunity to hear your first policy speech in the Senate. On behalf of all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle, we welcome you here, and it is a pleasure to listen to your priorities not only for Louisiana but for the Nation. I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

Ms. LANDRIEU. I thank the Chair. I rise to say a few words to congratulate my colleague, a gentleman I have known for many years and so many in Louisiana and around the Nation have come to admire and respect for his energy and commitment. I can only say the only disappointment in his maiden speech is that he did not call for the Mardi Gras to be a national holiday. The two of us are going to join forces and continue to work on that. I think

most of our colleagues would readily sign that resolution, so we will see.

But let me in seriousness thank him for joining the effort and putting his shoulder to the wheel to lower prescription drug costs for the people of Louisiana and our Nation. There are many critically important and urgent issues before the Congress but that ranks among the top. I believe his expertise in that area is going to be called on often in the next few months as this debate continues.

Also, I would need to mention that I thank him for his efforts in mentioning and fighting for, both in his time in the House and the Louisiana Legislature, the issue of coastal erosion. I see our good friend, the Senator from Arkansas, in the Chamber, and I was joking with his colleague, Senator LINCOLN, last night, saying if we are not successful in our efforts against coastal erosion, they, too, will have the great benefit of representing a coastal State because Louisiana may not be there if we do not address this issue.

On accountability in education, this Congress has made remarkable progress, and our State, you may not realize but as Senator VITTER knows, is leading the Nation in both accountability and also requirements in those new standards, and on transportation. I look forward to working with him.

He has two excellent committee assignments on Commerce and EPA. He will follow in the great footsteps of Senator John Breaux who served so ably on the Committee on Commerce in the area of fisheries as well as coastal issues on that committee, and on Transportation.

So I say to Senator VITTER, welcome to the Senate. Your energy, your enthusiasm, and your vision are going to mean a great deal to strengthen this already august body. Thank you and God bless you in your term.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Morning business is closed.

CLASS ACTION FAIRNESS ACT OF 2005

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume consideration of S. 5, which the clerk will report.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 5) to amend procedures that apply to consideration of interstate class actions to assure fairer outcomes for class members and defendants, and for other purposes.

Pending:

Durbin (Modified) Amendment No. 3, to preserve State court procedures for handling class actions.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the pending amendment is set aside and the Senator from Arkansas, Mr. PRYOR, is recognized.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Pennsylvania.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, parliamentary inquiry: We are proceeding now to go to the class action bill?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator is correct.

Mr. SPECTER. And the next order of business is the Pryor amendment?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. That is correct.

Mr. SPECTER. I see the Senator from Arkansas on the floor, so I will yield the floor.

AMENDMENT NO. 5

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I send an amendment to the desk and ask for its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. GRAMHAM). The clerk will report the amendment.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

The Senator from Arkansas [Mr. PRYOR], for himself, Mr. SALAZAR, and Mr. BINGAMAN, proposes an amendment numbered 5.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the reading of the amendment be dispensed with.

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

The amendment is as follows:

(Purpose: To exempt class action lawsuits brought by the attorney general of any State from the modified civil procedures required by this Act)

On page 5, between lines 2 and 3, insert the following:

“(1) ATTORNEY GENERAL.—The term ‘attorney general’ means the chief legal officer of a State.

On page 5, line 3, strike “(1)” and insert “(2)”.

On page 5, line 5, strike “(2)” and insert “(3)”.

On page 5, line 12, strike the period at the end and insert the following: “, but does not include any civil action brought by, or on behalf of, any attorney general.”.

On page 5, line 13, strike “(3)” and insert “(4)”.

On page 5, line 17, strike “(4)” and insert “(5)”.

On page 5, line 21, strike “(5)” and insert “(6)”.

On page 6, line 1, strike “(6)” and insert “(7)”.

On page 6, between lines 5 and 6, insert the following:

“(8) STATE.—The term ‘State’ means each of the several States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and any territory or possession of the United States.

On page 14, strike lines 20 and 21, and insert the following:

(1) by striking subsection (d) and inserting the following:

“(e) As used in this section—

“(1) the term ‘attorney general’ means the chief legal officer of a State; and

“(2) the term ‘State’ means each of the several States of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and any territory or possession of the United States.”; and

On page 15, line 7, insert “, but does not include any civil action brought by, or on behalf of, any attorney general” before the semicolon at the end.

Mr. PRYOR. Mr. President, I rise to offer an amendment to S. 5, the Class