

Furthermore, we will extend alternative minimum tax relief for Americans. The AMT was created in the 1970s, and times were much different. Today, an unacceptable number of families are exposed to this unfair tax, and this needs to stop.

Mr. Speaker, the facts are crystal clear: The Republican progrowth economic policies adopted by this House and this Congress are leading the way, and I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to put politics aside, vote for the American people, vote today to prevent a tax increase on millions of hardworking American families.

TAX BREAKS NOT WORKING FOR MIDDLE-CLASS AMERICANS

(Mr. BISHOP of New York asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BISHOP of New York. Mr. Speaker, is there any doubt today that this administration's first priority continues to be tax cuts for the wealthiest at the expense of education, health care and homeland security, all of which are being cut to pay for these tax cuts?

We have been promised that extending dividend and capital gains cuts will create a rising tide that lifts all boats. But American families know that it takes so much more than a trickle-down effect for tax cuts to deliver relief from rising gas prices, soaring tuition and skyrocketing health costs.

If the tax cuts had performed as our friends on the other side of the aisle promised, an exploding economy would have offset these strains. Instead, we are now burdened with \$400 billion deficits, \$3 trillion in new debt since 2001, and deep cuts to hospitals, schools and law enforcement.

How can we possibly justify tax breaks for millionaires worth more than the entire amount President Bush requested for the Department of Education and more than twice his budget for the VA? The answer is that we can't. We just can't.

Instead, Americans who need our help the most must get in line and patiently wait for the Republicans' tax cuts to make any meaningful difference, if they ever do, in their daily struggle.

Mr. Speaker, middle-class Americans deserve much better.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PROGRAM SAVES MONEY FOR SENIORS

(Mrs. MYRICK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, to date, more than 30 million Americans have signed up for the new Medicare prescription drug program, and that is because it saves them money. An AARP survey found that almost 80 percent of

those enrolled in the Medicare prescription drug plan say that the new benefit is meeting or exceeding their expectations. Seniors don't have to choose between prescription drugs and paying their bills or putting food on the table anymore.

And there is still time for seniors who are not currently enrolled to sign up for the program. They have until May 15th to sign up without any penalty.

They simply have to call 1-800-MEDICARE and ask about drug savings, and there will be someone there who will help to walk them through the process.

Again, the deadline to sign up with no penalties is May 15, so call and save today.

PROVIDE REAL TAX RELIEF FOR CONSUMERS AND REPEAT ENERGY TAX BREAKS

(Mr. CLEAVER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. Speaker, how high do gas prices have to go before this administration is willing to break its ties with the oil and gas company CEOs? For 5 years now, the major oil companies have been bringing in record profits, while the pain at the pump has grown worse for average Americans.

Today, consumers are paying \$3 a gallon. If you are making minimum wage, that means your first hour at work is used to buy 1½ gallons of gasoline for your car.

Major oil companies just reported \$16 billion in profits for the first quarter alone, and the national response has been moral outrage. Yet last year they pushed through an energy bill that gave oil and gas companies an additional \$20 billion in tax breaks and subsidies.

The problem is, those in charge here are not willing to have the courage to stand up and make things right.

TIME FOR ACTION ON ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, one of my colleagues referenced the study from the Law Library of Congress entitled "Immigration Law Sanctions and Enforcement in Selected Foreign Countries." It evaluates the policies and the practices of Brazil, Egypt, Japan, Mexico, Sweden and Switzerland. The countries were selected specifically to provide a geographically and racially diverse group for comparison purposes.

What the study found is that strong enforcement of immigration law and tough sanctions can effectively reduce illegal immigration.

Mr. Speaker, it is of concern to us that we learned yesterday that the U.S. Government is releasing information

on the Minutemen border patrols to the Mexican Government. It is very frustrating that our government would be both willing and able to release information to the Mexican Government on these patrols, yet unable to adequately deter illegal entry into this country.

Mr. Speaker, I want to see a border wall or technology improvements that will actually halt illegal border crossings. There is incredible consensus among Tennesseans that enough is enough on this issue. It is time for action.

DO-NOTHING CONGRESS REFUSING TO ADDRESS NEEDS OF AMERICANS

(Mr. BUTTERFIELD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, today is the 130th day of 2006. Guess how many of those days this House has been in session to address the needs of the American people? Twenty-nine. Twenty-nine. This is only the 29th voting day of the year here in the House of Representatives.

No wonder, Mr. Speaker, the American people have lost confidence in this Congress. The Republican majority would rather recess than tackle the tough issues of our day.

Or could it be that the Republicans are simply incapable of governing? House Republicans have yet to pass a budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Before the April recess, the House Republican leadership brought a bill to this floor, but was forced to pull it from consideration after determining that it would fail.

Regardless of whether or not Republicans are able to pick up enough Republican votes this week, the fact remains that they have presided over the largest fiscal collapse in American history. Five years ago they inherited record budget surpluses, and they have turned those into record deficits.

□ 1030

PORK BOOTLEGGERS

(Mr. MCHENRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MCHENRY. Mr. Speaker, some say we have no border security. The Associated Press reported that border authorities inspecting a car crossing into the United States from Mexico uncovered a food item in a strange place. Customs and Border Patrol officers searched the man's car, and they found two pounds of raw pork, oh, heaven forbid.

The meat was wrapped in foil inside two disposable diapers. Bringing in pork is prohibited because the "other white meat" can carry hog cholera. Some say we have no border security. Authorities seized these items and fined the man \$250.

Mr. Speaker, you are telling me, this report tells me that the Border Patrol can stop 2 pounds of pork in a diaper from entering this country, but we can't stop \$58 billion worth of illegal drugs and half a million illegals crossing the border each year?

This is crazy. We must fix this problem before people start smuggling themselves in diapers.

ENERGY POLICY IN AMERICA

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, today I rise in opposition to America's energy policy, which takes from the working class Americans and rewards rich oil companies. Under President Bush's plan more than \$20 billion has been waived in royalty fees and more than \$5 billion in giveaways to big oil-producing corporations.

Legislation considered by this body last week targeted our States and our communities as the culprits of high gas prices, rather than pointing a finger at oil companies who made more than \$110 billion in profits in 2005 and \$16 billion in the first 3 months of 2006.

But we know better. Just yesterday, the Environmental Council of States stated that they were not aware of any credible report that our States are denying or lagging behind on permitting of new refineries and the expansion of existing refineries. Documentation to the contrary has not been presented to our committee, Energy and Commerce Committee.

Rather than take on wealthy oil company executives, this administration and this body continue to delay real action to help working class families and small businesses.

I hope that we can resolve this issue soon.

MEDICARE ENROLLMENT

(Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BARRETT of South Carolina. Mr. Speaker, on December 8, 2003, President Bush signed the Medicare Prescription Drug and Modernization Act of 2003 into law. While I may have a few differences with certain aspects of this legislation, we have come a long way since the bill first became law.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have made great strides to make this implementation process as painless as possible. The first enrollment period for Medicare part D will end in just 5 days.

Over 27 million seniors across America now have coverage and are saving money on their prescription drugs. Currently, the State of South Carolina has over 438,000 people with prescription drug coverage. Almost 80,000 of those seniors are living in my district.

As the enrollment deadline of May 15 nears, I urge my constituents to call 1-

800-MEDICARE with any questions. It is important to take an active roll in managing your own health care.

CONGRESS SHOULD EXTEND THE MAY 15 DEADLINE ON THE MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the pharmaceutical industry influenced the passage of a Medicare prescription drug plan last year. It is not great, it is just all we got. The deadline is May 15 for seniors to enroll in this program.

If seniors are not enrolled in 5 days, they will face a financial penalty each month for the rest of their lives. Since it took effect at the beginning of this year, the logical problems of implementing this plan have proved enormous. Seniors across the Nation have complained about the confusing number of plans to choose from and the change in prescription benefits each offers.

Research has shown that many of those who contact the Federal Government for help receive incorrect information or no information at all. It is no surprise then that millions of seniors have yet to select a drug plan.

Now with only 5 days to select the right plan or face a steep penalty, these seniors find themselves under pressure to make the best decision for their health and their pocketbook.

Mr. Speaker, serious health decisions require time and information. Our seniors deserve more.

MEDICARE PART D

(Ms. HART asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. HART. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call for a stop to the misleading and dishonest rhetoric from some political circles that has been used to purposefully scare seniors regarding the new prescription drug program that is available through Medicare. These hollow claims that it is too expensive for seniors or doesn't provide good coverage have been repeated by groups across the country.

These couldn't be farther from the truth. By every true measure, the new program is succeeding in its core mission of helping Medicare patients save money on their prescription drugs. Participation in the program has now exceeded its goal of enrolling 30 million by the conclusion of the first year, and it is only May.

In addition, since the beginning of March of this year, seniors have been enrolling in the prescription drug plan at the average rate of 416,000 seniors per week.

The overwhelming reason that so many Medicare recipients have now enrolled is simple. They are seeing real savings on the cost of their prescrip-

tion drugs. The average senior who signs up for a plan will save more than \$1,100 on their prescription drugs this year and low income seniors projected to save about \$3,700; the average premium, only \$25. Some in my State are paying just over \$10.

Mr. Speaker, with so little time left to enroll, I encourage my colleagues help seniors enroll, not scare them.

FIVE DAYS FOR REPUBLICANS TO REJECT BUSH PRESCRIPTION DRUG TAX ON SENIORS

(Ms. WATSON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, we must stand up for America's seniors. As this calendar shows, House Republicans have less than 1 week, only 5 days left to join Democrats in extending the period seniors have to sign up for private prescription drug plans. If this Congress refuses to act, millions of American seniors who have yet to choose a plan will be penalized with the Bush prescription drug tax that will stay with them for the rest of their lives. The Bush administration is trying to force American seniors to make a decision that will impact both their checkbooks and their health in the next 5 days.

Five million seniors have still not chosen a drug plan. But the Bush administration wants to scare all of these seniors into choosing a plan before May 15, regardless of whether or not they are comfortable or ready to sign up for a plan.

Mr. Speaker, it is time House Republicans declare independence from the White House. As we mark off another day, House Republicans must join us in taking action this week.

THE DEMOCRATS TRIED ON MEDICARE

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, you can't say the Democrats haven't tried their hardest. When it comes to the Medicare prescription drug benefit, they have complained, criticized and have held town hall meetings to encourage seniors not to sign up. Luckily for America's seniors, they have decided to listen to the facts instead of the negative spin.

Recently the Department of Health and Human Services reported that more than 30 million Medicare beneficiaries are now getting coverage and saving money on their prescription drugs. This surpasses their expectations of 28 to 30 million enrollees in the first year. I suppose adding to the Democrats' frustration are recent polls showing broad support for the new benefit, as well as amazing success stories of seniors who are now reaping big savings in their prescription drug costs.