

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to follow my colleague from Tennessee to talk about the bad behavior of vice presidents.

Let me first of all say that when you are a civilian, you are a civilian. But I rise today to express my deepest disappointment in the behavior of the Vice President of the United States of America. A man was injured on the soil of Texas; and, lo and behold, it took us 20 hours before the American people and the President of the United States could have one iota of information.

I wish the attorney in Texas best wishes and good health, but I want to say to the Vice President of the United States that the inherent powers of the presidency do not inure to you, where you are allowed to travel secretly on Air Force II, to not allow the press to follow you as any public servant would have and to hide and cover up a drastic and tragic incident that occurred in the United States of America or anywhere around the world.

I believe the Vice President should own up to what occurred. I understand he made some remarks today, a little too short and a little too delayed. I believe we have seen again a cover-up of this administration, and the Vice President is the chief cover-upper of the United States of America.

Mr. Vice President, you, too, are subject to the laws of the United States of America.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WESTMORELAND). The Chair reminds all Members to direct their comments to the Chair.

REIMPORTED PRESCRIPTION DRUGS BEING DESTROYED

(Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. GINNY BROWN-WAITE of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I would like to bring to everyone's attention that Customs and Border Protection has recently begun confiscating and destroying prescription drugs intercepted at the U.S.-Canadian border. Unfortunately, CBP is offering no recourse to appeal this action.

While we all know that reimporting prescription drugs from Canada has not been legal in the United States for decades, this practice is not helping our seniors. However, if Border Patrol is suddenly going to enforce a law that many believed that government was no longer interested in enforcing, then they certainly should notify shippers and purchasers. Instead of simply confiscating and destroying these prescription drugs, they should include a warning in the first instance. The majority of the people purchasing these drugs are seniors on fixed incomes and likely do not have the money to repurchase them once they are destroyed.

I urge Customs and Border Protection to at least warn customers when agents intercept these packages. A simple letter would save a lot of grief for many, many seniors who use this procedure and not just seniors but other Americans who choose to purchase their drugs from a Canadian connection.

SAY NO TO HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

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

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, when President Bush served as governor of Texas, that State had more uninsured people than any other State in the union, and his system continues until today: Texas still has more uninsured people percentage-wise as well as numerically.

Today, President Bush visited Ohio to try to sell his latest health care scheme. The reality is his health savings accounts are simply tax shelters for the healthy and wealthy, leaving more Americans worse off. Indeed, the numbers of the uninsured in Ohio have grown dramatically during his administration. More than one out of four people under the age of 65 went without health insurance, and almost half of Ohio's households with children are uninsured, while 76 percent of the uninsured are members of working families.

The President's travel stop today reminds me of his Social Security drive to privatize that a year ago. The American people said no. Our working families deserve better and should not buy this latest ploy for health savings accounts either that are going to leave most Americans in the drink.

HONORING SARAH TERRY

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

Mr. GOODE. Mr. Speaker, Sarah Terry, who is the director of the Farmville Fifth District Office, has battled breast cancer for the last several years and has undergone numerous chemotherapy treatments.

She has served as Executive Director of the Farmville Area Chamber of Commerce, a member of the Longwood University Board of Visitors, and a leading promoter of outdoor activities such as hiking and cycling. She is a leading proponent of the Virginia Life Fund for the Uninsured, which has raised funds for catastrophic health care for those who cannot afford insurance.

Sarah's enthusiasm for life, her community and her fellow Americans is contagious; and she is a true inspiration for many. We are grateful for the contributions that she has made; and we look forward to her continued outstanding service to Farmville, Virginia, and America.

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HEALTH CARE

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

Mr. KUCINICH. Mr. Speaker, we are always glad to have the President of the United States in Ohio, but his health care policies miss an important fact, and that is that \$1 out of every \$4 for health care in the United States goes to the for-profit sector. \$1.6 trillion is spent every year on health care in the United States, but over \$400 billion goes for corporate profits, advertising, marketing, the cost of paperwork, up to 30 percent for the cost of paperwork.

We have over 46 million Americans who lack health insurance, who lack access to quality health care. H.R. 676, the Conyers-Kucinich-Kaptur bill, presents Americans with an alternative, universal, single-payer, not-for-profit health care, Medicare for all.

There is no reason why anyone in this country should be lacking health care when America has the resources right now. It would not cost much more than what we are paying right now. As a matter of fact, Americans are paying for a universal standard of care. They are just not getting it because it is all about corporations making a profit. It is not about people. Support Medicare for all.

CHECKS AND BALANCES

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, I would remind the gentleman from Ohio that Tulane Medical Center opened today with a lot of fanfare. That is one of those dreadful private, for-profit corporations; and they are the first such hospital back in business in New Orleans. Ray Nagin said he wished he could bottle that and extend it to other companies.

Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to talk about the domestic surveillance that was in the news earlier. My colleagues may not have noticed a rather insightful op ed piece that appeared in the Washington Times on January 6 of this year penned by an Alan Nathan.

Mr. Nathan writes that neither Congress nor the judiciary can remove this repeatedly court-recognized inherent authority granted to the President under the Constitution, just as the President cannot remove any of their powers guaranteed in the same great document.

When called upon, all intelligence organizations in the United States are structured to operate in conjunction with the military and accordingly become an integral part of the President's domain as Commander in Chief. Congress voted for this on September 14, 2001, in the war resolution invoked under the War Powers Act of 1973 authorizing the President to use force against all nations.

Given that the battleground includes this country, where the attacks were made, Democrats and Republicans objecting to his actions should be hard pressed to find him derelict in his duty.

Mr. Speaker, we should take the words of Mr. Nathan to heart. They were germane January 6. They are germane now.

ELECTION AS CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the House Republican Conference, I offer a privileged resolution (H. Res. 679) and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 679

Resolved, That the following Member be, and is hereby, elected to the following standing committee of the House of Representatives:

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND THE WORKFORCE: Mr. McKeon, Chairman.

The resolution was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WESTMORELAND). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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

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

MEDICARE PART D

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Medicare part D. Now, with great fanfare in the dark of the night, this Congress passed this plan, a plan written by and for the pharmaceutical industry. The pharmaceutical industry is the number one beneficiary. According to some academics, it should raise their profits by 28 percent over the next 5 years, not bad for the pharmaceutical industry.

Some forget history. The first time this bill came up on the floor of the House, it was being hotly debated, and then suddenly at 5 o'clock the House had to adjourn. Why did the House have to adjourn? Because the Republicans were going downtown to have their huge annual fundraiser, and a number of the principal fund-raisers were from the pharmaceutical industry. They are very, very generous to those who benefit them.

The pharmaceutical industry does really well. The insurance industry gets subsidies to offer these plans, even though they say that these are going to be great plans. They are getting subsidies to offer them. Still, seniors aren't lining up in great numbers for the plans because they are unbelievably complex plans.

Now, there are a number of problems that have come to our attention recently. In fact, even the chairman of Walgreen's, no lefty Democratic institution there, said that the government needs to intervene because the multiplicity of plans is just so unbelievable that people cannot understand them. Even worse than that, these plans are the most restrictive insurance product in history for requiring prior approval and testing before drugs are approved.

When the CEO of Coventry Health Care was contacted regarding the 39 different forms with multiple procedures the physicians would have to access in order to give drugs with prior approval to seniors, he said that could not be true. He checked, he came back, and he said it was true. He said, for instance, there are things like Accutane which could cause birth defects.

I know that we are pushing the boundaries of science, but I don't think too many 65-and-over American women eligible for Medicare have to worry about that. There are some other disorders for which Accutane can be a very helpful and legitimate treatment.

What they are doing is, first off, you have to buy into a plan. They can change the benefits weekly. Even if you took that plan because it offers the drugs you need on a weekly basis, the insurance industry can change it. Then even if they keep those drugs available, they are going to require that your doctor and you jump through incredible hoops to get prior approval.

Even seniors in nursing homes who have been on drugs for 10 and 15 years with a very well-known and documented condition, their doctors are being required to order expensive tests to justify continuing prescriptions for those seniors; and in some cases prescriptions have been interrupted, jeopardizing the patients.

This is a plan that wasn't set up to be convenient or easy for seniors to use to provide a meaningful benefit. It was set up first to benefit the pharmaceutical industry, then the insurance industry. The plausible excuse for that is to provide some coverage for seniors, coverage which, by the way, is going to cost taxpayers \$800 billion.

Because, guess what, the bill, as written by the pharmaceutical industry, and passed by the Republican Congress and signed by the President, says that the Federal Government is outlawed, outlawed, from negotiating lower drug prices for seniors. That is prohibited by Federal law, despite the fact that the VA does it, and recent studies show that the VA is acquiring drugs between 40 and 80 percent cheaper than are being offered under these plans to our seniors.

The pharmaceutical industry said it would not be fair if the government negotiated lower drug prices for everybody on Medicare. It would not be fair to do that.

Come on, the most profitable industry consistently in the world, and they say that would not be fair; the industry that is gouging profits out of Americans, while selling drugs for half or a third the price overseas, and then crying all the way to the bank, when seniors here have to pay three and four times as much for those particular drugs.

What would be fair is to have the government negotiate lower drug prices for everybody eligible for Medicare. You can walk in. You do not have to have any insurance; you are going to get that big discount. Then the government could offer a simple plan, one plan, that would give benefits to cover that additional cost, and they could do that on a sliding scale basis.

We could save, over the next 5 years, the taxpayers of the United States \$600 billion and provide a more meaningful benefit to all our seniors than this plan is doing. But we will not do that here, because the seniors aren't big campaign contributors like the pharmaceutical and insurance industries. Hopefully, there will be a revolt among America's seniors, and they will demand we change this plan, do something meaningful and save the Treasury \$600 billion.

WESLEY SMITH

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

Mr. DEAL of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, many institutions affect the progress of communities and States across this Nation as we continually evolve in our march of civilization. Usually, those of us in government in particular think about those institutions being governmental units, or maybe even churches or philanthropic foundations. We usually think those are the institutions that affect this.

Recently I was reminded of a rather profound affect that the banking institutions of this country have on our history, and especially history of my congressional district and my State. Yesterday, my good friend Wesley Smith celebrated 35 years of service as president of Northwest Georgia Bank. Now, most of you do not know where that is. But it is in, as its name implies, in northwest Georgia, headquartered in Ringgold, Georgia, right below the Tennessee line just south of Chattanooga.

Wesley, in those 35 years, has become the longest-serving president of this rather dynamic banking institution, which itself was created in 1904. During the tenure of Wesley Smith, the bank has grown from \$6 million to more than \$500 million, has tripled its number of branch offices, and now operates in both Georgia and Tennessee.