

MEDICARE PART D: A FLAWED HEALTHCARE POLICY

(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, two new reports released yesterday make an open and shut case that the Medicare part D drug benefit is inadequate to meet the needs of America's seniors. One report indicates that drug prices are increasing at four times the rate of inflation. The other report shows that the VA, which negotiates with the drug companies for better pricing, is paying 46 percent less for brand-name drugs than the prices listed by Medicare plans for the same drugs.

Is there any better proof that we should have allowed the government to negotiate for lower prices when we had the chance? How can we explain or justify these exorbitant drug price increases to seniors? The drug companies say it is not their fault and blame the insurance companies, who return blame to the drug companies.

There is really nowhere else to turn except to the Medicare bill, which continues to disappoint, frustrate and anger seniors. Part D works just fine for the drug companies and the HMOs, but it is not working for those seniors who, through no fault of their own, haven't signed up for a plan and will pay for the consequences of a bad plan for the rest of their lives.

Like our energy policy, which coddles oil companies earning record profits, the Republicans' flawed health care policy built around part D rewards the pharmaceutical industry, another coddled industry, at the expense of one of the most vulnerable segments of our population, our seniors.

NEEDED LEGISLATION

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, as we work toward completing our appropriations work, I think it is important to acknowledge that there are some policy questions of concern.

I have introduced legislation to address the signing statements of the Executive, the President, which allows the President not to veto legislation when he is opposed, but really to send out signing statements that then causes the executive branch to totally ignore the laws of Congress. If we are to have a separation of powers, we need to make sure that Congress has its own powers to pass its laws and have them applied.

I also think it is important to acknowledge that the no-knock decision by the Supreme Court is in and of itself unconstitutional, and I will be writing legislation to put back in place that

the fourth amendment is truly constitutional.

It is important, as well, as we debate the immigration issue that we bring down the tone of divisiveness, and I hope to file a sense of Congress resolution that would encourage all Members of Congress not to divide us on the debate of immigration.

I hope we will pass legislation as well that says no amnesty should be given to those in Iraq who kill American soldiers. I will be introducing legislation on that as well.

CONGRATULATING THE MIAMI HEAT ON WINNING THE NBA CHAMPIONSHIP

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

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Mr. Speaker, on a lighter note, it has been said that there is no "I" in "teamwork." Indeed, a successful team beats with one heart. So, I rise today to congratulate the entire Miami Heat organization, Micky Arison, head coach Pat Riley, the Heat players and the entire Miami community for beating with one heart and winning the 2006 National Basketball Association championship.

The Heat became only the third team in NBA history to win the final series after being down two to nothing. For four games in a row, they were too hot to handle.

I know that I speak for Heat fans throughout south Florida and across the country when I say that the Heat could not have made us more proud last night. The entire Heat organization overcame a great deal of individual and collective adversity throughout the season. Yet despite doubters, they proved to have the hearts of champions.

The Heat victory was a true tapestry, comprised of the youthful talent of Finals Most Valuable Player Dwayne Wade and the veteran leadership of Alonzo Mourning, Shaquille O'Neal and Gary Payton. This team truly is 15 strong.

Congratulations to the Heat fans in south Florida, who have patiently waited 18 years for a championship parade on Biscayne Boulevard. There are no fans more deserving.

INCREASE FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, the Federal minimum wage is now the lowest that it has been, adjusted for inflation, in over 50 years. Here in Congress we have not made an adjustment; we have not given the lowest-income, most hard-pressed economic citizens of our country any raise since 1997.

I thought for a moment that there was a glimpse of hope as we have seen

a proposal that finally passed in the Appropriations Committee that would have made in order an amendment that would have raised it gradually from \$5.15 to \$7.25 an hour. But now we see this is tied up in partisan politics, and it looks as though the Republican leadership is not going to allow the House of Representatives to vote on giving low-income Americans a salary increase.

Mr. Speaker, in my State of Oregon the voters have gone ahead and passed a statewide initiative that provides an automatic increase in the minimum wage, taking it out of politics. It is supported by our public, it is good for our economy, and it is good for our citizens. I hope we can do the same here in Congress.

REDUCING AMERICA'S DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL

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

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, in 2003, we spent \$103 billion buying oil from nondemocratic countries, such countries as Iran, Syria and Venezuela, hardly American allies by any stretch, and, in fact, people who in some ways are funding the war against us in the war on terrorism.

We need fuel independence. We need to pass the bipartisan H.R. 4409, which accelerates the market towards flex-fuel vehicles, ethanol-run vehicles, hybrids, and an assortment of other energy-saving measures. It will, in fact, by the year 2020 reduce our dependence on foreign oil by 20 percent.

We need to drive by a cornfield and say, that is our next tank of gas. The technology is already out there. In Brazil, 40 percent of the cars run on ethanol. In America, only 3 percent of them do.

What we need to do is make it so that this technology is affordable and practical for all households in America. I urge my colleagues to cosponsor and pass H.R. 4409.

HONORING POLICE LIEUTENANT GREGORY BENNERSON

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

Mrs. CHRISTENSEN. Mr. Speaker and colleagues, as I rise this morning, my Virgin Islands community is paying a fond but sad farewell to a favorite son of St. Croix, Police Lieutenant Gregory Bennerson.

Just to speak of his years as a policeman and rise to the position of commander of criminal investigations does not do full justice to his life and contributions. He dedicated much of his free time to youth and involved himself in many activities that uplifted and guided them to be the best they could be.

Greg served as a senator in the 23rd Legislature of the Virgin Islands. He was well on his way to being elected once again, because our community values and needed his consistency, his diligence, his commitment to truth, to values, and to all of the people of the Virgin Islands.

Greg was a devoted son, father, and solid, caring, selfless friend. It was out of this that his humanity became manifest and extended to everything else he did. We are all saddened by his loss, which touches my family and I personally.

Although we grieve, we should take heart that knowing Greg won an even more important election. He now looks over and advocates for us in a far better and all-powerful place. May he rest in peace.

Mr. Speaker and colleagues, my Virgin Islands community is saying a fond but sad farewell to a favorite and favored son of St. Croix, Lieutenant Gregory Bennerson of the Virgin Islands Police Department.

As excellently as he has served the Department—just to speak of—his years of service as a policeman and his rise through the ranks to the position of Commander of Criminal Investigations does not do full justice to his life and contributions.

A young man himself, he dedicated much of his free time to youth and worked with boys and girls clubs, was a PTA president and led the pre-cadet and Police Athletic League, but also involved himself in many other activities that uplifted our youth and guided them to be the best they could be.

He also gave his time and support to domestic violence prevention and the Women's Coalition, as well as to improving health services at the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital. Greg loved St. Croix and was its dedicated advocate and devoted servant.

First a Republican following in the footsteps of his much revered dad, he became a Democrat and served his adopted party with commitment and passion. Greg served as a Senator in the 23rd Legislature of the Virgin Islands and at the time of his passing he was well on his way to being elected once again. Our community valued and needed his consistency, his diligence, his commitment to truth, to values, to right, and to all of the people of the Virgin Islands.

Though a big tease, with a subtle sense of humor, more than anything else he was a devoted son, father, and solid, caring, and selfless friend. It was out of this that his humanity became manifest and extended to everything else he did.

We are all saddened by his loss, which touches my family and me personally.

As I said in tribute at a gathering at home, although we grieve, we should take heart knowing that Greg won an even more important election. He now looks over and advocates for us in a far better and all powerful place.

May he rest in peace.

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SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MACK). 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 Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

SUPPORTING THE WAR ON TERROR

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to proceed out of order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentleman from Texas is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. CARTER. Mr. Speaker, there was an historic debate on the House floor last week between both sides of the aisle concerning the war in Iraq. Unfortunately, I got a call late on Wednesday evening that my wife Erica had been rushed to the hospital with a serious medical emergency, and I was absent from that debate because I had to go to my wife's bedside at the hospital. I am happy to report she is at least out of the hospital, although the infection in her hand is still giving her a lot of trouble.

I wanted to at least state my opinion on the war in Iraq and the consequences of American action, and I think heroic action, that is taking place in Iraq and also in Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, we are involved in a war on terror. The battle for Iraq and the battle for Afghanistan are clearly part of that war on terror. And if you want to talk about terror, how terrible could it be that what we have discovered happened to two of our fine soldiers, Kristian Menchaca and Thomas Lowell Tucker, who were slaughtered and butchered by our enemy, and we are just learning of the horror of what they did to those poor young men, those heroes, those American heroes who were willing to stand in the gap and be counted so that the people of Iraq can do what they have done, form up a government, make that government functional, get that government to where it is operational so that we can meet our goal.

Our goal is a free Iraq, a democratic Iraq, because, as the President says, when we have free democratic countries, we don't have disputes with those countries that go to war. We are trying to advance the cause of freedom around the world and protect ourselves from people who would slaughter our citizens of this country.

This is not warfare that we are talking about of these people. We are abiding by the rules of war; they are abiding by the rules of terrorism, which is no rule. And that is why we have to continue to take this fight to the

enemy where they are until we have established a victory for the United States. And I honestly believe that victory is on the horizon.

I have made three trips to Iraq. I have visited with individual soldiers in Iraq. They are proud of their mission, they are proud of their accomplishments, they are proud of the things that they do for the Iraqi public. They have stories to share, as one soldier shared with me who was in the hospital and had a rose there with him, about a little girl who gave him that rose and said thank you. He didn't understand the language she was speaking, but he knew it meant thank you.

These troops are doing humanitarian as well as soldierly efforts to make life for the Iraqi people better. But, more importantly, we as American citizens should never tolerate an enemy that would butcher our troops. If there is any amount of decency in these people, they would at least abide by simple, simple rules of war. But they don't. We have had beheadings. We have had slaughter and mutilation of our American corpses.

Mr. Speaker, we are on the right side of Iraq. I am proud that the 4th Infantry Division, which is in my district, and the 1st Calvary Division have been active participants in making life better for the Iraqi public. And, Mr. Speaker, I honor them by standing here today and say I fully support America's war on terror and the war in Iraq. And I apologize that I was not here for the debate, but I am grateful for all those who stood up for the United States of America's effort in the battle of Iraq.

VOTING RIGHTS ACT

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

Mr. CLYBURN. Mr. Speaker, thank you so much for granting me this time.

As chair of the House Democratic Caucus, Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer my congratulations to Chairman SENSENBRENNER, Ranking Member CONYERS, the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Mr. WATT, and the chair of the Hispanic Caucus Mrs. NAPOLITANO, for the great work and the significant sacrifices they gave in helping us to fashion a Voting Rights Act renewal that we thought was acceptable for the vast majority of the Members of this body.

We are extremely disappointed, however, that the leadership of the House has decided to pull the Voting Rights Act which we had hoped to be considering this afternoon.

It is my understanding, Mr. Speaker, that the Judiciary Committee had 12 or 13 hearings, and everybody in this body had an opportunity to come before that committee to let their views be known. Everybody in the voting public had ample opportunity to present their views and their emotions to the committee.