

Myrick
ReichertRoybal-Allard
SandersSmith (NJ)
Sweeney

□ 1525

So (two-thirds of those voting having responded in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution was agreed to.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, due to illness I was regrettably unable to be on the House Floor for rollcall vote 17, final passage of H. Res. 357, a bill to honor Justice Sandra Day O'Connor on the occasion of her retirement from the United States Supreme Court and to commend her for her hard work and dedication to the law.

Had I been here I would have unquestionably voted "yea" on rollcall vote 17.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I was unavoidably detained at the United States Supreme Court, which is hearing the Texas redistricting case. Had I been present, I would have voted an enthusiastic "yea" on the Sandra Day O'Connor resolution.

U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

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

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge other nations to join us in the United States in voting against the proposed United Nations Human Rights Council. This council is by no means true reform. Some may argue that we have actually gone from bad to worse; that it is easier for the likes of China or Syria, Iran, Burma and Cuba to get on this council than it would be for the United States.

That is what we are dealing with in the current proposal. All countries on the U.N. General Assembly are eligible to become members no matter what their human rights record. This is the same General Assembly that in November of last year, amidst the horrible genocide taking place in Darfur, could not agree that Sudan was guilty of human rights violations.

For the sake of the victims of human rights abuses, we must take immediate action to prevent this travesty. Let us support our ambassador, John Bolton, in rejecting this so-called reform package which is nothing but a sham.

PORT SECURITY

(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, I think there are many issues we can be addressing; but as I recently came back from my district, it is amazing how the idea of selling our ports has caught the hearts and minds of the American people. So I think it is

important that we owe them both an explanation and also we owe them the responsibility of oversight.

It is important to note that in the 2007 budget we have cut resources for port security, and as well it is important to note that our largest ports in America are suffering under either no appropriations from the Federal Government of America or minimal support.

And so I offer legislation, one, to have a 2-year moratorium on the sale, leasing or operating of any of America's ports by foreign entities. And then I would ask for a major study by the Office of the Comptroller and Homeland Security to be able to determine the status of security in the Nation's ports.

It would be shocking to note that in Hong Kong, every cargo is surveyed, every cargo container. In the United States we do not do that. I believe we owe the American people secure ports, and we are prepared to do so.

□ 1530

HONORING PFC DANIEL WILSON

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

Mr. PRICE of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to honor a true American hero and to recognize the thousands of brave men and women that are currently serving our country both at home and abroad.

In December of last year, PFC Daniel Wilson of Cherokee County, Georgia, was on patrol in Baghdad; and like so many of his fellow soldiers, Wilson understood that these patrols are part of his everyday life and that it is a risk that they assume selflessly. On this particular day, Wilson's HUMVEE struck a land mine, throwing both Wilson and fellow soldier out of their vehicle. The wounds that PFC Wilson suffered were thankfully not fatal.

In February of this year, the Army awarded PFC Wilson a Purple Heart, and I rise today to say thank you to this young man. We send our deepest gratitude and respect to all of those serving in our Armed Forces. We here at home often do not take the time to truly appreciate how blessed we are.

The members of the United States military stand on the front lines of a great struggle to preserve freedom and democracy, and we could not ask for a more capable and professional group of men and women protecting our way of life.

HALLIBURTON REIMBURSEMENT

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

Ms. MCKINNEY. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Pentagon announced that it is returning \$288 out of \$300 million it was holding while investigating Halliburton for overcharging, even though

Halliburton was previously caught overcharging the Pentagon by \$27 million for meals for our troops.

Mr. Speaker, even as tens of thousands of Hurricane Katrina survivors face eviction due to FEMA, the United States Government is handing hundreds of millions of dollars to a company which has been plagued by allegations and admissions of fraud, waste, abuse, bribery and kickbacks.

The Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq was itself unable to account for \$9 billion, with over a billion of this reportedly having been lost to Halliburton.

Today, I urge Congress to establish a permanent war profiteering committee modeled after the Truman Commission after the Second World War.

Before this Congress writes the President another blank check, we need to investigate the gross incompetence and even corruption that exists with this administration.

DEAL, ORDEAL AND NO DEAL

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, the fiasco of allowing a foreign-owned corporation, foreign-country-owned company to come into our port situation, have information about our manifests, about ports, the shipping information, has gone through three parts.

First of all, it was the part of the deal. It was a deal that nobody knew about here in this House of Representatives. Once we found out about the deal, it has now gone through the ordeal, where we are bringing transparency to this deal that was bad for America. And soon hopefully, Mr. Speaker, it will be no deal because it is not a deal that is good for the United States, and it is certainly not good for Homeland Security.

Allowing a foreign country to own a corporation that goes into our ports and has access to information is a bad deal, no deal for the United States.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DAVIS of Kentucky). The Chair will recognize Members for special order speeches without prejudice to the possible resumption of legislative business.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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 Nebraska (Mr. OSBORNE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, today marks the 2-month anniversary of the Medicare prescription drug benefit, and it would not be too much of an exaggeration to say that, so far, the Part D, D stands for disaster.

The benefit is so complicated and convoluted that even beneficiaries with Ph.D.s have said they could not figure it out.

Why is this program so flawed? Because it was designed, or we like to say in the private sector, the first operation is take care of the customer first. I have yet to find a single pharmaceutical executive or an HMO executive who is complaining about this program, but I have found a heck of a lot of senior citizens who are complaining about this program. This program was never designed with our senior citizens in mind. If it was, you would not have the complexities that are happening for our senior citizens.

The executives of the drug companies will earn \$139 billion of additional profits that they would not have earned any other way; insurance companies, \$130 billion of additional profits over the next 10 years.

The complexity of the benefit shows, in my view, what was wrong and what we should have done right. Three simple steps:

One, with the May 15 penalty that will kick in, the tax, the senior Medicare tax, postpone that until HHS and CMS figure out what they should be doing, rather than what they should not be doing. No senior should be forced into a program where even the people running it do not know what they are doing.

Second, directly negotiate for prices. That is what the Veterans' Administration does. That is what Sam's Club does. That is what Target does. That is what Costco does. Anybody in the private sector, literally, bulk purchases get a better price than anybody buying individually.

And third, allow people competitive choices by reimportation, allowing them to buy drugs in Canada, England, France, where they can get competitive pricing which is 50 percent cheaper.

I have a Costco in Chicago. There is also a Costco in Toronto. We have up on our Web site the two Costcos, one in Toronto, one in Chicago. Same 10 drugs, same milligram, same dosage; and the Costco in Toronto is constantly \$1,000 cheaper for the same drugs over the same period of time than the one in Chicago. And yet both of them are stores that are supposed to be discount.

And lastly, allow generics to market quicker. If you had direct negotiations, reimportation, generics to market quicker, three free market principles where competition and choice rule, we would actually have cheaper pharmaceutical prices, things that seniors can afford, and save money for taxpayers as well.

And yet what we do not have are those programs. And we are forcing in the middle of May, May 15, senior citizens will literally pay a Medicare privatization tax.

On April 15, all Americans will pay a tax. On May 15, because of the complexity of this program, seniors will begin to pay a tax for the complexities.

Seniors that do not want to join this program, that are confused because of the way that they have been forced into plans, had plans drop their drugs, not offer all the drugs they need at a better price than they can get otherwise, will literally start to be taxed by the Federal Government.

Tens of thousands of beneficiaries, today in the New York Times an article highlighted that the beneficiaries are automatically assigned to plans and deciding to switch plans are finding that they are actively enrolled in two drug plans at the same time.

When you read a report on what is going on, you would think you were reading an after-action report on Katrina. What has happened over at HHS and Health and Human Services on Medicare is literally one more example of the disaster the Federal Government has had in running this plan. The situation leaves patients at risk, being charged two premiums or incorrect copayments.

In my hometown of Chicago, seniors have 62 separate drug plans to pick from. And I hear constantly from my constituents every day that the choices are causing confusion and problems. Pharmacists are not sure what is happening. The people administering the plans are not sure what is happening, and it is leaving seniors absolutely in total confusion.

Seniors need clearly more time to figure this out. They should not be penalized with a complexity tax, a privatization tax for taking the time to get the facts. Facts, I remind you, that even HHS and Medicare are not sure of what the facts are as it relates to what is the best plan.

Just to give you an idea of the tax we are talking about, if a senior decided to wait for 2 years before enrolling, there will be a 24 percent higher premium to pay. That is an additional \$7.73 per month on top of the monthly premium. If a senior waits longer, it can go as high as \$456 a year. For seniors on a fixed income, this is a tremendous financial burden.

Even before the drug benefit went into effect on January 1, there were problems. And the Republican colleagues who wrote the plan know what the problems are.

In fact, the drug manufacturers, again, I would like to repeat and I will

be done: \$139 billion in profits over the next 8 years and insurers, \$130 million.

THE THIEVES OF KATRINA AND RITA

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

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, in the disturbing days following Hurricane Katrina there was much confusion and chaos and catastrophe. Isaac Carloss and his wife, Debbie Anderson, used this tragedy to take advantage of innocent victims of this hurricane. Their deceptive and lawless journey was only recently halted by the Department of Justice.

According to the DOJ, Carloss' wife, Debbie, met an evacuee at a rescue shelter following the hurricane. Since the evacuee was unable to return to his home, Debbie gave the individual permission to use her address and receive mail. The evacuee then applied for FEMA assistance, and an express mail package addressed to the evacuee was sent to Debbie's residence. Debbie signed for the package with a fictitious name, opened the mail, and started her illegal spending spree across Louisiana.

The package included two FEMA disaster assistance checks totaling over \$4,000 intended for the evacuee. But Diane, Isaac and Debbie took these checks and went directly to the local car dealership where they used one of the checks to purchase a car. She then took the other check to a bank in Louisiana where she persuaded the teller to cash the check because they were victims, or she was a victim of the hurricane.

Just last week, in Louisiana, her husband, Isaac, was found guilty of one count of conspiracy, one count of theft of mail and two counts of theft of public money. He faces a sentence up to 5 years in prison. His wife, Debbie, has already pleaded guilty in January to a count of conspiracy. This is just one of the many examples of the vagrants that cheated the government and the victims of Hurricane Katrina and Rita.

Six months ago, when the ladies of the gulf, Katrina and Rita, pounded the gulf coast, thousands of people were left dismayed. They were distressed and in desperate need of aid. In the days following the hurricanes FEMA quickly began disbursing money to suffering victims. However, amidst all the confusion and chaos, fraud started. Now, 6 months later and millions of dollars wasted later, the winds have subsided, but the deception continues and the shady scams are getting more disturbing every day.

According to a recent Government Accounting study, Federal investigators have learned 1,000 people who applied for aid used Social Security numbers of dead people; 1,000 used bogus, nonexistent numbers, and tens of thousands have used names, birth dates and Social Security numbers of people that did not match.