

It showed, again, what we have been seeing over the past year: For each of the top 20 drugs prescribed to seniors, the lowest prices charged by any of the top private Part D providers are higher than the price secured by the VA. It is not just a little bit higher, but in many cases it is astoundingly higher.

Let's look at some examples. I am mentioning specific drugs, not to pick on particular drugs, but we talked about the fact in the committee that transparency, the ability to compare price, and the ability for people to know what they are purchasing is very important. This is something we want the Secretary, on behalf of the people of America, to be doing—looking at the differences in these prices, and the particular points where there is a wide disparity, using their negotiating power to be able to step in on behalf of seniors and the disabled.

When we look at Zocor, which I mentioned yesterday—the drug many seniors use to control their cholesterol levels—the lowest VA price for a year is just over \$127. The lowest price under a private plan is \$1,485.96—over a 1,066-percent difference. That is astounding. I argue that you could still continue to work with the Federal Government and partner to do research and bring that price down.

Why should seniors pay \$1,359 more in a year for this particular prescription drug than veterans do? It is exactly the same drug.

Now, I also mentioned Protonix yesterday. It is the same thing. We are looking at \$214.52 for a year, the VA price, negotiating the best price, and \$1,148.40 with the lowest Part D plan, a difference of 435 percent.

It is the same thing as we go through the next one, which is Fosamax, which is a 205-percent difference, and on down.

We are talking about substantial differences in price—some smaller than others. But the reality is negotiation works. All we have to do is look at the fact that, on average, we are seeing a price difference of 58 percent between the Veterans' Administration and what is happening from the lowest possible plan with the top 20 most prescribed drugs for our seniors. In other words, for half of the drugs our seniors need most, the lowest price charged is almost 60 percent higher, and it is not demagoguery to say people are choosing between food and medicine. It is not. It is not an exaggeration to say that right now somebody is sitting down and deciding: am I going to pay the heating bill or get the medicine I need? That is the reality for people. We need to have a sense of urgency about fixing this.

I also want to speak to the fact that we have heard a lot about the VA. Unfortunately, we have heard things that are not true, according to information from the Veterans' Administration. Yesterday, I was asked if I knew there were well over 1 million veterans who moved to Medicare Part D. The asser-

tion was made that veterans were leaving the VA because the VA could not give them the drugs they wanted. I knew there were veterans who were adding Medicare Part D coverage. We went back to look and see what that was all about after I received that question. In fact, approximately 280,000 veterans have signed up for Medicare. They are not leaving the VA. In fact, it is not even clear that they are getting any drugs through Medicare at this point. They may have done it to add extra coverage. We are not sure what that mix is, but we are not talking about a million veterans or more running to leave VA because it is such a bad program.

Moreover, according to both the Government Accountability Office and the Institute of Medicine, the VA system is working well. According to the GAO, an overwhelming majority of VA physicians report that the formulary, the grouping of drugs that are available, allows them to prescribe drugs that meet their patients' needs.

The Institute of Medicine has reported that veterans believe their needs are being met. Access to drugs is an issue in less than one-half of 1 percent of the complaints about the VA health system. One-half of 1 percent relate an inability to be able to get the medicine they need.

I also need to point out that at our Finance Committee hearing last week it was mentioned that there are fewer drugs available to our veterans. In fact, we have heard it today on the floor. That is exactly the opposite of what is true. The VA actually has more drugs on its formulary, its list of available drugs. I have not heard anybody say, first of all, that we should take the VA system and impose it on Medicare. But there is a lot of misinformation about what is happening in the VA and what is happening for our veterans, and there is a lot we need to do to focus on the reality and the facts of the huge disparities, an average of 58 percent, and the highest is over 1,000 percent.

I find it very interesting that, on the one hand, we hear two different kinds of arguments occurring. One is that negotiation will make no difference in price. On the other hand, we hear we will lose lifesaving research because of negotiation. Those two arguments don't fit together, even though they are being made by the same people. We don't have to worry about research and development if, in fact, negotiation doesn't lower prices. I argue—and I think common sense dictates—that when you are looking at a 1,000-percent difference in price, at the fact that the American taxpayer is contributing, on average, at least as many dollars for research as the brandname industry is—overall, at least contributing that, because we want the lifesaving drugs—when you look at all of the facts, it doesn't add up; it doesn't add up for anybody but the industry itself to be able to argue that they want to keep the prices this high. I appreciate that.

Any industry that has such a significant advantage certainly wants to fight to keep it. But I am very hopeful we will join with the House in saying this is lifesaving medicine, it is not an optional product, and we have to get the best price for our seniors and for the disabled in America.

I thank the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Colorado is recognized under a unanimous consent agreement for 10 minutes.

#### ENERGY DEPENDENCE

Mr. SALAZAR. Mr. President, I rise today because our dependence on foreign oil is dangerously out of control and it is putting our Nation at risk. It is weakening our defenses and undermining our power around the world.

From my point of view, as I look at the defining issues of the 21st century, there is no doubt in my mind that our energy security is at the very top of those issues which we must address. We must address it because of national security implications, because of our economic security, and because of the environmental security of the United States of America.

First, with respect to the national security of our country, it is incredible to me that in this year, 2007, we are importing 60 percent of our oil from foreign countries, and 22 percent of the world's oil reserves are official sponsors of terrorism that are under some kind of U.N. sanction. When we look at the conflict underway in the Middle East, when we look at the tensions with Venezuela, we in the United States of America are putting our very national security at risk simply because of our overdependence on foreign oil.

Second, the economic security of the United States of America is very much at risk as well. We need to have a new energy economy that will produce jobs in the United States of America and give us stability with respect to the costs that go into our energy economy.

Third, the environmental security of our Nation is also very much at risk.

As we move forward to try to address issues such as global warming, it is important for us to address this issue from a national security point of view, an economic security point of view, and environmental security point of view. Therefore, I believe the Congress and President Bush, Secretary Bodman, and others who are involved in this effort have to get very serious about our energy security. It is time for us to put rhetoric behind us.

As we heard last week in the Senate Energy Committee, we have a pre-9/11 energy policy that is failing us in a post-9/11 world. We have an energy policy which is still a pre-9/11 energy policy, and it is failing us in this post-9/11 world. We must take dramatic steps to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels,

conserve energy with new energy-efficient technologies, and expedite the development of renewable energy resources. We must build a clean energy economy that restores our independence and our competitive advantage around the world.

For much of the last century, the United States has been the single most powerful Nation on this globe. We have been a clarion voice for freedom, democracy, and justice for all people. My father and 16 million young Americans served their country in World War II, defeating the Nazis and the fascists around the world, earning us our role on this globe of the most powerful Nation of the last century. Many died to achieve that legacy for the United States of America. My uncle was one of those 400,000 Americans who died in that conflict of World War II, leaving his life, his blood, and his spirit on the soils of Europe.

Today, our dependence on foreign oil is sapping the strength that the World War II generation built for us. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Iran are playing their oil holdings like chess pieces on a chessboard, applying pressure here, threatening there, and eroding U.S. influence around the world. Since 2001, China and Russia have partnered to lock up oil in central Asia, rolling us out of the region. Venezuela has wielded its resources to bully its neighbors and to oppose our interests in South America. And Iran has used its oil resources to court Russia and China, convincing them to oppose our diplomatic effort to stop Iran from building nuclear weapons. We ought not put our foreign policy in the hands of Iran or Venezuela or the sheiks and kings of the Middle East.

Countries that wish us harm know full well of our addiction to their oil. They know that any disruption in supply sends gas prices through the roof and slows our economy. And they are happy to profit from our addiction. Oil money lines the pockets of the terrorists, the extremists, and unfriendly governments. It helps the Syrians buy rockets, such as those the Hezbollah has in Lebanon today. It reaches bin Laden and al-Qaida. It funds the militants in Nigeria who capture and terrorize westerners. The sad truth is that we are funding both sides of the war on terror. We spent over \$100 billion last year to fight the extremists in Iraq and Afghanistan—extremists armed with weapons purchased from our oil revenues. It is crazy.

We are importing more oil today than we ever have. Over 60 percent of our oil—more than 12 million barrels a day—comes from abroad. The vast majority of this oil comes from state-owned oil companies in unfriendly countries. This is only going to get worse in the coming years. Take a look at who controls the world's oil reserves. If we look at the chart, the countries of Saudi Arabia, Iran, Russia, Iraq—and the list goes on—control most of the world's oil reserves, and

many of these countries are either unfriendly to the United States or have a shaky government around them. But we know one thing for sure: It is not the best interests of the United States they have at heart.

If our oil dependence continues, we will be relying on companies such as Petrovesa, Saudi Aramco, and Gazprom for our oil. What does this mean? It means that Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iran, and Venezuela will hold our very energy security in their hands, which means they hold our very national security in their hands.

We have to change course, and we have to change course now. We are no longer a world where oil costs \$12 a barrel. We no longer carry the illusion that others wish us no harm. We live in a complex and dangerous time. Yet we continue to depend on this pre-9/11 energy policy that simply is not working for us in this 21st century.

The good news is that the future of our Nation's energy security lies right here at home. It lies in our farms and in our fields and with the ingenuity of American workers and American technologies.

There are two things we can do immediately to improve our energy security. First, we can dramatically increase our energy efficiency. Improved efficiency is the cheapest and largest source of energy. The technologies that will save us energy and money are already in place, but Government policies often discourage consumers from using them. We have to be much smarter as a country about energy efficiency.

Second, we need to expand our domestic energy production from renewable energy sources. We have taken aggressive steps over the past few years to open new sources of oil and natural gas in this country. We see the effects of these policies throughout our country, especially in my State of Colorado where natural gas production has jumped over 50 percent over 2000, and we see it in the Gulf of Mexico where just a few months ago we in Congress opened millions of new acres for leasing.

But we have fallen woefully short on the renewable energy front. We have fallen woefully short. In last year's State of the Union Address, President Bush touted the virtues of cellulosic ethanol and solar power. He told the American people:

... We have a serious problem, we are addicted to oil.

And he indicated that he would make a serious commitment to renewable energy. That is what the President said a year ago in his State of the Union Address. Yet, in fact, that hasn't happened. The proof is that it simply is not in the budget, and the proof is that if you look at what has happened with renewable energy and energy efficiency, we are investing less in these initiatives than at the time President Bush became President. If you look at our renewable energy investments from

2001 to 2006, you see this line, this thin line. We have actually been investing less in renewable energy resources from 2001 until 2006. For us to have declined by almost \$100 million during that time period in terms of what we are investing in renewable energy means we are not walking the talk about what we can do with respect to renewable energy.

I also want to briefly demonstrate the reductions that have been made with respect to our investments in energy efficiency. Again, in 2001, we were investing about \$900 million to make this a more energy-efficient country. In the time that has passed in the last 5 years, now, in 2006, we are investing \$200 million less. So when people talk about getting energy efficient or investing in renewable energy, the fact is America simply is not walking the talk. We need to start walking the talk if we are going to get to energy independence.

Mr. President, may I inquire how much time I have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

Mr. SALAZAR. I ask unanimous consent to speak for an additional 2 minutes.

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

Mr. SALAZAR. I thank my friend and colleague from Massachusetts, Senator KERRY, for being patient.

We need to move forward to start walking the talk, and the first step is for President Bush, when he comes before the Congress for the State of the Union Address, to talk about energy independence, but to make sure the budget that is put on the table for Congress to consider is a real budget that is robust in terms of how it will move us forward with respect to renewable energy, with respect to alternative technologies, and with respect to investments in a greater energy-efficient economy. This is an imperative for the United States of America, and unless we move forward aggressively in a bipartisan fashion, bringing conservatives and progressives, Democrats and Republicans, together on this initiative, we will be compromising the national security of the United States in a manner that is absolutely inexcusable.

I look forward in the days ahead to working with my colleagues as we move forward with a robust energy package that will get us to energy independence.

I thank the Chair, and I yield the floor.

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, first, let me begin by congratulating my colleague from Colorado on his comments, which are important. As I think the Chair knows, during the course of the 2004 cycle, I made energy independence one of the centerpieces of the campaign. In fact, I am proud that I was the first Presidential candidate to ever advertise in a campaign on that topic. We tried to lay out why and how it is

so critical to the security of our country, the health of our country, the economy of our country, and the jobs that would be created. Of course, in terms of environmental protection, it is common sense. There are huge gains to be made with respect to efficiency. Efficiency, in fact, is the largest place available to grab CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere, which is the biggest problem with global warming, global climate change. So there is an enormous agenda here. In fact, this administration isn't even in the game. It is sad when you measure it against the demands of the country.

So I appreciate what the Senator has said. This is something that has to become a priority over the course of the next days here, and we are going to do everything in our power to help make it so.

#### TRIBUTE TO PAUL TSONGAS

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, 10 years ago today, this country lost a leader and this Chamber lost a colleague, and Massachusetts lost a favorite son. Ten years ago today, cancer took Paul Tsongas from us prematurely at 55 years of age. He left three wonderful daughters: Ashley, Katina, and Molly, and his special and extraordinary wife Niki, and he left an enormous number of friends and people whom he touched and affected across the country, those who joined him to help reform our politics.

Paul was a very different kind of public person. He walked his own path. He walked to his own tune. Today we remember him and we join the people in Merrimack Valley and across Massachusetts and so many others who came to appreciate and respect him and learned a lot about him through his Presidential campaign. We honor a life that elevated those whom he knew, and the countless people he never met, but whose lives he affected through the things he fought for and believed in.

Paul Tsongas inspired with his optimism and his drive, his disarming humor, and his love of causes both distant and local. He was proud of his Greek heritage, proud of his roots as the son of a drycleaner, proud of Lowell, and he became a champion of environmental protection and expanding opportunity so the full measure of the American dream that he came to see as a young person himself was accessible to everybody else.

He set a high standard for public service which he continued even after he left the Senate. He continued out of office to work across the aisle proving, with former Senator Warren Rudman and their Concord Coalition, that balancing the budget was not a partisan agenda item and that fiscal discipline could, in fact, invigorate and not stifle the American economy. Paul Tsongas was a Democratic deficit hawk before it was popular and, I might add, together with Senator Gary Hart, was part of that new vanguard that helped

to define the defense issues of our Nation in a modern context.

He understood also that being a Democrat did not mean being antibusiness. In Lowell, Paul served as a city councillor and then later as a reformed county commissioner. He loved Lowell. He loved that old mill town where he was born. Even at the end of his life, he knew every single person there, from Main Street through the largest businesses, and he could still see where he had grown up from the house where he lived in his last days.

Paul came to Washington, where he worked with Tip O'Neill, Joe Moakley, Republican Sil Conte, and Ed Brooke in a bipartisan, golden age for the Massachusetts delegation. Paul's love of ideas and his love of Lowell helped trigger one of the earliest sparks of high-tech innovation in Massachusetts. Through his championing of early computer companies such as Wang and others, he helped to fuel the whole era of such stunning ingenuity that it changed the face of America and enhanced our technological leadership in the world. Paul helped Lowell reinvent itself after years of decline, and in 1978, he was elected to the Senate. After one term only in the Senate, he gave up his seat in order to be with his family and fight cancer. He was sustained by the loving support of his sister, his wife, and his daughters, whom he treasured. Paul at age 7, had lost his own mother to tuberculosis, so this idea of being with family during that kind of crucial time was particularly poignant to him.

As a friend of Paul's famously told him: No man ever died wishing he had spent more time with his business. Paul was first diagnosed with cancer in 1983 and he fought it courageously from that day forward. Right to the end of his life, he was tenacious in his support for the causes he believed in, in his fight against the devastating disease that eventually took him but never stole his spirit. Instead, he brought to the fight the same optimism and determination that made him so successful in the Peace Corps. In 1992, when in remission, Paul ran for the Presidency, and he ran one of the most bracingly honest and politically courageous Presidential campaigns of our time. His was a campaign defined by common sense and by that wry sense of humor more than it was defined by fiery oratory. He managed to win Democratic primaries in New Hampshire and three other primaries and four State caucuses before the man from Lowell finally ceded the nomination to the man from Hope.

Paul reached across the country to the distant shores of the Pacific as co-author of the Alaska Lands Act, which protected millions of acres of pristine wilderness. He made an admirable contribution to our environment. His aggressive policies to protect our natural resources were truly an investment in our future. He made life-long friends in Ethiopia as a result of his Peace Corps service in the early 1960s, proving even as a young man that his sense of the

world reached beyond the horizon and to cultures far from his roots.

Today, in Lowell, the name Tsongas graces a museum of industrial history, part of the National Park Service, where the full story, both good and bad, of the industrial revolution and the textile industry in Massachusetts is presented for thousands of visitors, young and old, every year. Today, the name Tsongas graces an arena where athletic excellence, a passion dear to Paul's heart, is practiced along with political conventions and trade shows.

So I rise today not only as the Senator who inherited his seat; I rise as an admirer and a friend. To know Paul Tsongas was to see up close what this business we work in means in people's lives, and the full arch of his time on Earth illuminates the larger impact each of us can have on our communities, on our State, and on our Nation.

That is why this day is special for this Chamber, a sad, proud memory for Lowell and for Massachusetts, and a moment to reflect on Paul's life and his contributions. It is hard to believe Senator Tsongas has been gone for 10 years. If he were with us today, Paul would be a strong voice full of insight, humor, and wisdom, all in that inimitable style, once modest, but incredibly forceful, the style we came to know and appreciate so much. Lowell, MA will miss Paul Tsongas, America misses him, but we remember him today.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to join my colleague, the junior Senator from Massachusetts, to mark a significant and sad anniversary. Ten years ago today, America lost a great patriot, Massachusetts lost a great advocate, and JOHN KERRY and I lost a great friend when Paul Tsongas passed away after a valiant and courageous fight with cancer.

Paul Tsongas was the epitome of a public servant. From his time in the Peace Corps in both Ethiopia and the West Indies in the 1960s through his spirited campaign for the Presidency in 1992, Paul lived by the words my brother Jack believed so strongly, that each of us can make a difference and all of us should try.

Paul Tsongas tried his best to do so, all his life, and he made a large and continuing difference. To the people of his beloved Lowell, he proved that our great industrial cities can be reborn and renewed, with a creative emphasis on reshaping their great history to meet the needs of our current high tech economy. In the 1970s and 1980s, when America was moving inexorably to the suburbs and so many of our great urban centers were being hollowed out, many of our people found it increasingly difficult to see a bright future for urban areas decimated by the decline of manufacturing.

But today, across the country, a new movement has been born to encourage creative investment in our cities, and