

the people of the United States to observe such days with appropriate ceremonies and activities. Approved September 18, 1978.

Today, we commemorate the liberation of Auschwitz.

Later on, we will commemorate these days of remembrance. I have lived long enough now to know that if we fail to remember the Holocaust, a great human tragedy, a crime against humanity unlike any other, there is no other crime against humanity that can be compared to the Holocaust, just as there is no other crime against humanity that can be compared to slavery.

If we fail to remember the crimes against humanity committed in Auschwitz, I believe, unfortunately, that humankind is capable of repeating the horrors of the Holocaust. It is our eternal vigilance that will prevent this from ever occurring again. Our failure to be vigilant will create days that the human mind cannot conceive of occurring again.

I am here today as a Member of Congress to make sure that my record reflects that I will not forget, that I will stand with my Jewish brothers and sisters against all who would claim that the Holocaust never occurred, against all who were to proclaim that Jewish people have done things that would merit this kind of horrific behavior. I stand with them. They are my brothers and sisters. Their lives are important to me, and the lives that were lost are important to me.

I want my record to reflect that when I had the opportunity as a Member of Congress to stand before the world and take a stand, Mr. Speaker, I want my record to reflect that I took a stand against the evils that took place at Auschwitz and the evils of the Holocaust.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

GRAVE CONCERNS FOR TRICARE BENEFICIARIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. CARTER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Georgia?

There was no objection.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, during my Special Order today, my colleagues and I will express grave concerns about the impact that our servicemembers and their families are facing as a result of the Defense Health Agency's decision to proceed with Express Scripts pharmacy network contract.

We are going to address how TRICARE beneficiaries are no longer guaranteed access to their medication at their local pharmacy of choice. This decision by Express Scripts has severely impacted those who serve or have served our country honorably by reducing patients' access to quality healthcare.

We continue to hear from pharmacists and patients across the country who are expressing concerns about these changes.

Let's keep in mind that Express Scripts is currently under Federal investigation by the Federal Trade Commission for their role in increasing prescription drug costs and unfair and deceptive practices towards pharmacies.

Servicemembers and their families who rely on their local pharmacist for critical care, such as cancer treatments or knowledge of their medical history, are now forced to seek that treatment elsewhere.

It is our responsibility to ensure that their access to affordable, quality healthcare is not hindered.

The Biden administration has tools at their disposal to stop this, but instead, they are turning a blind eye.

Express Scripts, Inc., a pharmacy benefit manager, PBM, for the TRICARE program while serving as a mail-order and specialty pharmacy itself, made the pocket-lining move of reducing the number of TRICARE's in-network pharmacies by almost 15,000 last October.

Luckily, there are some businesses, like EPIC Pharmacy Network in my district, that decided to continue filling these prescriptions despite the loss.

On top of that, Kroger has announced that their pharmacies will no longer be able to serve TRICARE beneficiaries. As a result, hundreds of thousands of men and women of the United States Armed Forces, military retirees, and their families are at risk of losing access to necessary prescription drugs and treatment.

Since that date, beneficiaries in rural communities have been left with no local options for filling their prescriptions.

I used to own and operate a local pharmacy. In fact, I used to own and operate three local pharmacies. Understand that no matter how badly we want to help people, at the end of the day you are running a business, and that business needs to be profitable so that it can keep its doors open.

The sudden and wrongful reduction goes far beyond simply reducing access to care for TRICARE beneficiaries.

For those who need specialty medicines, the mail-order pharmacy used by Express Scripts threatens the medical integrity of the medicine and places the beneficiaries at risk of receiving the medications late, damaged, or missing.

Of greater concern, it eliminates the crucial role pharmacists play in protecting beneficiaries' health, especially those requiring multiple medications

where contraindications are always a concern.

Overall, these pharmacy network changes will put servicemembers and their families at risk in receiving the prescription drugs and treatments they need.

These brave men and women dedicated their lives to defending our freedoms, and one of the things we promised them when they signed up is quality healthcare while they served and when they retired from the military, as well.

We are repaying them with a healthcare system that profits off of sick military personnel, family members and retirees.

Luckily, there are some businesses, like EPIC Pharmacy Network in my district, that decided to continue filling these prescriptions despite the loss. I applaud that decision, but they never should have been put in this position to begin with.

It is a pain for pharmacies, but it is detrimental to our military servicemembers and their families.

These brave men and women dedicated their lives to defending our freedoms. We are repaying them with a healthcare system that puts profits ahead of people.

I brought this to the attention of the Defense Health Agency back in October to discuss how we could restore local pharmacy access to these patients.

As a pharmacist myself, whose Congressional District is home to every single branch of the military and a large veteran community, I was dumbfounded by their response: No one cares about losing access to their local pharmacy? You have got to be kidding me.

It is one thing to make that claim to me; it is another to make it to the nearly 800 men and women who sent me their personal story detailing how losing access to their medicine is impacting their health and their well-being.

Hunter, a servicemember from South Carolina, saw the cost of his prescription go up by almost 600 percent after Express Scripts made changes to the TRICARE pharmacy program.

Is this how we want to treat our heroes who have given everything for our country, by increasing the cost of their medication by 600 percent? Seriously?

Or Jacqueline, who says this move "has made the difference between stopping to get medicine on the way home or going an additional hour or more to the nearest base pharmacy before going home."

For patients like James, a retired Air Force veteran, this move was more than just a frustration. It was a direct attempt to undermine small business. "Why would the Federal Government choose large chains over supporting small businesses," he asks?

"In my neighborhood store, I am not just a number. The service I receive is far better than the big box pharmacies—once again, the large companies are trying to squeeze out the little ones. When will the Federal Government stop supporting this?"

It is time for the Biden administration to answer James' question or at a minimum the questions posed by a bipartisan coalition of legislators in the two letters I have led to the DHA on this issue.

I am mailing these stories to the White House because servicemembers and their families shouldn't be cut out of their own healthcare decisions.

I look forward to hearing from my Republican and Democrat colleagues about these issues.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Tennessee (Mrs. HARSHBARGER), a fellow pharmacist and a Member of Congress who represents the First Congressional District of Tennessee, so she can share her thoughts on this subject, as well.

Mrs. HARSHBARGER. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend, BUDDY CARTER from Georgia, for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today because our veterans deserve better.

Our Active-Duty servicemembers and veterans chose to serve this great Nation knowing it would take unimaginable sacrifice and precious time away from their loved ones.

Many of them left their lives behind and were taken to far corners of the world to face enemies of democracy. They did this for us, for our freedom, for our ability to stand here today without fear of persecution.

This is a sacrifice we should all feel indebted to, including those people at Express Scripts. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the company, it is a Cigna-owned pharmacy benefit manager, known as a PBM, that administers the TRICARE benefits on behalf of the Department of Defense.

Last year, the Department of Defense allowed this PBM—and this was suddenly and without warning—to institute pharmacy network changes that impacted 400,000 TRICARE beneficiaries by removing almost 15,000 independent community pharmacies from the retail network.

□ 1400

Most people in this country live 5 minutes from a pharmacy. They have immediate access to a pharmacist. They don't have to make an appointment, and they can go in and talk to that professional.

Most of those pharmacies are now excluded. They are located in rural and underserved areas. These people are no longer able to rely upon their local pharmacy to access needed medications and in-person pharmacist counseling.

These TRICARE beneficiaries and their families are being forced to drive sometimes long distances to find a corporate, in-network pharmacy, or if they can't do that, they are funneled into an Express Scripts mail order program, and that is unacceptable.

This abrupt change by PBM giant Express Scripts is especially problematic for a small group of TRICARE beneficiaries who are chronically ill, that

have a disability and receive infusion medications in their homes.

It will almost certainly delay care for those patients with chronic conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis, heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

By the way, I am talking to oncology groups now that are absolutely tracking that these patients do not get their medicine in time, or go without their cancer drugs, and it causes an immediate response and a degradation of their health based on the cancer that they have.

The department's decision to carry on with this contract despite the grave impacts we all knew would impact our veterans and servicemembers is reprehensible.

Veterans and Active-Duty servicemembers and their families are losing access to quality care, and those with cancer and rare diseases are often being faced with the impossible choice of switching to a new pharmacy that may be far, far away or paying out of pocket to stay with the pharmacy they have come to know and trust.

America made a promise to our veterans. We promised to take care of those who have risked their lives to defend us. Leaving our heroes in jeopardy to line the pockets of a multibillion dollar PBM is inexcusable.

As a licensed pharmacist for over 30 years, I know how much a community leans on their trusted, independent pharmacist, and especially in rural areas like I serve and like BUDDY serves.

It is true that pharmacists are still one of the most accessible healthcare providers in the United States. Trusting the pharmacist dispensing one's medicines has a very real impact on health outcomes and costs for the patients.

I thank Congressman BUDDY CARTER for his leadership on this important issue. BUDDY and I were both pharmacists in our former careers, we still are pharmacists, and we know firsthand just how much this policy will hurt health outcomes.

Our veterans and Active-Duty servicemembers deserve to trust that they can access the medication that they rely on, and they deserve to have strong advocates against these greedy PBMs.

They deserve all our thanks and more. They deserve so much better. The Department of Defense must reverse this grave injustice, and I won't stop fighting until our heroes get what they have earned and what they are owed.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. I thank Representative HARSHBARGER for her insightful comments. We are very fortunate to have her in Congress and very fortunate to have her representing the profession of pharmacist.

As she indicated, she understands firsthand the impact that this is having on patients. After all, she was on the other side of the counter for many years, just like I was.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from the great State of Colorado (Mr. LAMBORN).

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to come to the floor of the House of Representatives to discuss the need for TRICARE beneficiaries to have access to quality healthcare.

I thank Mr. BUDDY CARTER, my friend from Georgia, for his leadership on this important issue.

The military population in my home district of Colorado Springs is well over 100,000 people. It includes Active-Duty, National Guard, Reserves, retirees, and veterans, including their families and dependents, the number of TRICARE beneficiaries in my district is substantial.

The impact of Express Scripts cutting the number of in-network pharmacies and reducing reimbursements has been felt in Colorado Springs.

I have heard from constituents who have had trouble finding quality pharmacies for their prescriptions and who are faced with increasingly long wait times, decreased hours of service, and unscheduled closures.

Additionally, beneficiaries in my district have had to change their pharmacy numerous times as TRICARE rates continually fluctuate.

The process of finding a new pharmacy takes up a substantial amount of time and beneficiaries ultimately cannot reliably depend on a pharmacy to consistently deliver their necessary medicine.

The men and women serving in our military, retirees and their families who serve alongside them, deserve more options for their healthcare, not less.

Access to quality, accessible, reliable pharmacies should not be something that our military families have to worry about.

I urge the Defense Health Agency and Express Scripts to carefully consider the impact these recent changes have made on military families and to make the changes necessary to facilitate increased pharmacy access and availability to beneficiaries of the TRICARE network.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. I thank the gentleman from Colorado.

If you will notice, one of the things that he pointed out and I pointed out earlier in my remarks, he represents a lot of veterans. He represents a lot of people who have retired in his district.

These military bases, many of our veterans, when they leave the service, they retire in the area where they have been serving.

That is certainly the case in my district, and I suspect it is the case in Representative LAMBORN's district as well.

That is why this is having such a big impact on people. It has disrupted their lives. This is not just a cost-saving move here.

This move has impacted veterans who served our country, sacrificed for our country. It has impacted them and

their families after we promised them we would give them quality healthcare, affordable healthcare, and yet, it has done just the opposite.

Thank you, Representative LAMBORN, for your comments.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I recognize a good friend of mine and a fellow member of my delegation who also represents an area with a heavy military presence and a heavy veteran presence in his district just north of my district.

I know that Fort Gordon is in his district, and I know that there are a lot of retirees and a lot of veterans who have retired in his district as well.

I yield to the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. ALLEN).

Mr. ALLEN. Thanks to my friend and colleague from Georgia, Mr. CARTER, for organizing this Special Order and for your leadership on this issue.

This is an important issue. You know, growing up and then, of course, now, you know, my pharmacist is a dear friend of mine.

I don't want to go to another pharmacist, although you get all these offers to get this through the mail and all that. To me, your pharmacist is kind of like choosing your doctor.

I mean, they do so much for the communities that they serve, particularly in rural America.

But what we are talking about here, and as Congressman CARTER said, it is about the American troops, our veterans and their families that are at risk of losing access to lifesaving prescriptions.

In October, the Defense Health Agency's pharmacy benefit manager, Express Scripts, cut nearly 15,000 pharmacies from its network, all because they wouldn't accept Express Scripts' outrageous terms.

Why does this happen?

I mean, of course, obviously we are shining a light on this because the entire country needs to know about this, particularly our veteran communities.

This decision left a quarter of a million people with few or no local, in-person options to access the medicine and treatments they need.

Countless Americans choose to get their prescriptions filled at their local or independent pharmacy specifically because of the quality of service they provide.

Like I said, it is a personal thing. It is a relationship. Your pharmacist has knowledge of your medical history, and the relationship that patients have with their community pharmacist is important, and it must be allowed to continue.

This choice is important, especially for veterans who have sacrificed so much. This decision has negatively impacted scores of veterans, particularly those living in rural areas like the ones I represent in Georgia 12.

My colleagues and I will continue to put pressure on this administration to do the right thing and step up to ensure that community and retail pharmacies are able to continue to serve

our military by offering reliable, local access to their medicine. This is critical.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. I thank the gentleman for his comments.

I want to point out one thing that he so astutely pointed out, and that is about the rural areas. Keep in mind, now, yeah, they are still going to have a lot of the big box pharmacies that are going to be participating in this. They will still have the mail order, but there are a lot of rural areas that are going to be impacted here. A lot of our veterans live in rural areas.

Mr. ALLEN's district, like my district, has a lot of rural area in it. Our constituents are impacted by this.

Thank you for your comments.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out one other thing. Express Scripts is one of three PBMs in this country that control 80 percent of the market.

That's right. Express Scripts is one of three PBMs in this country that control 80 percent of the market.

Now, of TRICARE, they have this contract. They control 100 percent of the people covered under this contract. But it is also important—we mentioned mail order, and mail order is a big component of this as well.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, Express Scripts PBM, guess who owns the mail order pharmacy that they are using? They do.

That's right. Express Scripts PBM, which is owned by Cigna Insurance, also owns the PBM and the mail order pharmacy.

So they are pushing these patients to their pharmacy. They are pushing them away from the independent retail pharmacy and pushing them to their mail order pharmacy.

And you wonder how they are going to save money?

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I recognize a new Member of Congress and a new member of the Doctors Caucus. We are delighted to have the Congresswoman from Virginia, Representative JEN KIGGANS, as a member of our Doctors Caucus, and as a Member of our body. I invite her now to make comments on this as well.

Mrs. KIGGANS of Virginia. I thank the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. CARTER, for yielding me time to speak on this important issue.

Mr. Speaker, it is fitting that my first address on the House floor is about a subject that is important to me and so many people in my district.

As a Navy veteran and a primary care nurse practitioner, I am well aware of the challenges that our servicemembers face in the healthcare arena.

Over the past few weeks, I have heard from countless concerned constituents who are unable to get their medications from their local pharmacy because the pharmacy is no longer in the TRICARE network.

It is not just TRICARE members who are being affected by this change. I recently talked to a constituent who

owns a small pharmacy on Virginia's Eastern Shore.

They are at risk of losing a significant percentage of their business because the reimbursement rates issued from TRICARE are now too low to be sustainable for pharmacy owners.

I was sent to Congress to help the people of Virginia's Second District in any and every way that I can.

This new contract helps absolutely no one. In fact, it does just the opposite.

Our military and military families need to remain strong to be effective. It is our job to ensure their needs are met and their health is prioritized. Make no mistake; this TRICARE contract does neither.

I strongly urge TRICARE to return to the negotiating table and ensure military members and their families can receive their medications, and our pharmacies are fairly compensated.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. I thank the lady from Virginia for her very insightful comments. She, herself, a veteran. She, herself, a healthcare professional. She, herself, who has seen the impact that this has had on veterans and on their families.

The inconvenience, how they are having to travel further now to get their prescriptions, how they are having to pay more.

All of this after they served our country, sacrificed for our country, and now this is the way that we are going to repay them, by allowing a company that has as their motive profit to treat them this way?

Is that the way the Biden administration wants to handle this?

Is that what they want to allow?

I don't think so.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I yield to the gentleman from Alabama (Mr. MOORE). Another valuable Member of the United States Congress and a neighbor to my west. I ask him for his comments.

□ 1415

Mr. MOORE of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, I am fortunate to be able to represent a district full of patriotic veterans who have served this country honorably. Every American and, certainly, Congress, owes our veterans, all we have promised them, and more.

The issue we are discussing today has imposed significant hardships on veterans and their families who have long relied on trusted, local, and convenient healthcare professionals for their prescription medications.

Due to negotiations between Express Scripts on behalf of the Department of Defense and independently owned pharmacies, thousands of local pharmacies are unable to provide prescriptions for TRICARE patients.

This means that many retail pharmacies are unable to work with TRICARE customers, restricting pharmacy access for millions of people all over the country, including many in my district and primarily in rural Alabama.

I have heard numerous upsetting stories from my constituents who have been impacted. One tells me he can no longer use Express Scripts due to his medication prices more than doubling from his local pharmacy, which no longer accepts TRICARE. He recently waited over 4 hours for his prescriptions at his new pharmacy.

Another constituent, who recently had to stand in line at a pharmacy for over an hour with other upset patrons, explained to my office that multiple times Express Scripts has run low on his mental health medications and failed to deliver them to him on time, causing a dangerous interruption in his medication schedule.

Mr. Speaker, one of my constituents has used the same pharmacy for 54 years and thinks of them as a partner. They are in frequent communication regarding her health, and the professionals there often help her decide which medications will be most beneficial to her.

Unfortunately, Express Scripts has not met her needs. When visiting another pharmacy recommended to her by Express Scripts, she was informed that they are not a fully functional pharmacy and that they were also unable to help her.

She has told my office that our veteran population loves our country, but too often it seems our country does not love them back.

The treatment of our own veterans is unacceptable and, in the greatest country in the world, our government must do everything possible to alleviate the suffering of our veterans and their families, who have already sacrificed so much.

I appreciate my colleague, BUDDY CARTER, an experienced independent pharmacist, for hosting this Special Order and his leadership on this issue.

We have no greater responsibility than keeping our promises to our veterans, and I am committed to ensuring that families using TRICARE receive the utmost care from their trusted, local healthcare professionals.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his comments; they are insightful. He, like all of us, has constituents who have been inconvenienced and have been rudely and, quite honestly, just selfishly disrupted.

He mentioned the fact that people who have been using the same pharmacy for years, now having to find another pharmacy, all because of profits, all because this company, Express Scripts, is trying to make more money off the back of our veterans. We should be ashamed. This administration should be ashamed for letting this happen.

You hear it from me. You have heard it from some of my colleagues. I want to share with you just a couple of stories real quick; a story that was sent to me. I mentioned that we have heard from constituents, and we have.

A concerned citizen wrote and said, I have been using the same pharmacy

since 1985, and now I have to change; no choice of my own, but now I have to change. My pharmacist knows my family's medical issues, and now I have to train a pharmacist pertaining to my medical history.

This is an example. Another one—and we are fixing to hear from a retired marine and general; but another one.

As a retired marine Master Sergeant who suffers from exposure to Agent Orange and Camp Lejeune water contaminants, my family has used a local pharmacy in our hometown of Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, for 25 years. Our pharmacist is not only a healthcare provider but is also a well-known friend and neighbor.

One of B.A. Family Drugs most prized services was free home delivery by their Drug Bug, a Volkswagen Beetle. We can no longer rely on that excellent service.

Again, this has disrupted people's lives. But it is more than just people; it is our heroes, our veterans.

At this time I want to recognize, as I mentioned earlier, one of our true American heroes, and one that I am honored to serve with in Congress, one of our—I believe it is four generals that we have here in Congress serving with us now, and that is Congressman JACK BERMAN from Minnesota.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. BERGMAN).

Mr. BERGMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for taking leadership on this; and I have to just correct one thing for the RECORD. I was born in Minnesota, but now I represent Michigan; and that is okay. I have roots in both because I was raised by a Minnesota farm girl, and now I am married to an Iowa farm girl. So now if we can get Iowa in there at some point, we will be in good shape. I will be happy at home.

When I just referenced my mom and my wife, my dad was in World War II. My father-in-law was in World War II. When we think about the sacrifices everyone in our country made, it was really the families that sacrificed on the front end to ensure that their loved ones, servicemembers deployed around the world to end the tyranny of World War II, that the family members at home sacrificed to ensure their servicemembers could fight the fight.

I think, today, it is true, and still is true, that when you talk about TRICARE and all the services that it provides, it is not about the servicemember, it is about the servicemember and their family because without the comfort of knowing that the family is being taken care of by the TRICARE system; that it is a system that does not institute change for the wrong reasons.

What we are hearing today, this is change for profit's sake, and that is the wrong reason.

So when you think about, what is readiness? Our troops have to be trained and ready to deploy at a moment's notice to protect our national

security. That readiness includes family readiness.

Family readiness includes the availability of TRICARE, the availability of prescriptions, especially in my district, in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and northern and lower Michigan, where we have a lot of rural and remote families that can't get to the pharmacy every day; that cannot—whether it is snowstorm, whether it is age, whatever it is, we need to ensure that our TRICARE system is robust, it is complete, it is fair pricing to make sure that, in the end, everybody wins, not just a couple.

We have got roughly—the Department of Defense requirements—TRICARE supports about 9.4 million servicemembers, retirees, and their families around the world. That doesn't seem like much in a Nation of 330 billion. But guess what? It means everything to that 9.4 million servicemembers and their families.

The comprehensive nature of TRICARE, as we saw during the COVID time, advancement of telehealth, the advancement of diagnosis, the advancement of treatments, prescriptions, and all of that, it all blends the work going forward and what we need to do to support our servicemembers and their families.

It is incumbent upon us, as Members of the House of Representatives, and the Senate, and the President, to ensure that no policy is put into place that gives any entity an unfair advantage when it comes to their priorities versus the needs and the priorities that we have and our commitment to our members of the Armed Forces.

So with that, we know this is ongoing; and I can tell you one thing, as a member of the VA Health Subcommittee, and on the Committee on Armed Services, I look at this issue from the front end of recruiting and enlistment standards, to retention, to retirement, to going into the VA system, all the way along in that servicemember's life and their family's life, and we are committed here to doing the right thing for those folks because they did the right thing for our country.

Mr. CARTER of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for his service to our country and for his interest in this subject. It is extremely important, and we appreciate his leadership.

Mr. Speaker, again, I want to share with you some of the comments that we have gotten in our office. From Rick P: My neighborhood pharmacy is 5 minutes away and is the only one in town. But now, with changes, I have to go 30 minutes to and from the nearest pharmacy in the next town. That is not right. I have been going to the same pharmacy for 22 years, and they know my medical problems and prescriptions I take.

This is the way we are going to treat our veterans. This is the way we are going to treat our veterans' families.

From Bob S. In Gainesville: I am retired Air Force. My wife and I live in

Gainesville, Georgia. We currently use Express Scripts mail order pharmacy, or VA mail order when possible. My wife has insurance through her employer which makes her ineligible for Express Scripts mail order. It also means she can only use three pharmacies that accept both insurance. We find—Listen to this, Mr. Speaker. We find ourselves driving 3 hours one way so we do not have to pay \$2,000 out of pocket each month for her medications. Now, with fewer pharmacies accepting TRICARE, we will probably have to make the trip more often.

Wow, what a promise we are keeping to these veterans. We are promising them that we are going to give them quality healthcare for their sacrifice, for their service to our country; and we are making them drive 3 hours, one way, so that they can save on the co-payment and won't have to pay \$2,000 out of pocket. Ridiculous.

Another concerned citizen. I called to have a prescription refilled 2 weeks before I was out of my medication. However, my medication never came. I called Express Scripts to inquire about its status, and they told me that I had no refills. So I currently am out of medication, and per Express Scripts, I cannot get my medication for 2 to 3 weeks. How is this right? I have served my country for 30 years, and I cannot get my medication for 2 to 3 weeks?

What are we supposed to tell these people?

What are we supposed to tell our veterans?

Mr. Speaker, this is not acceptable. You don't want this. I don't want this. No Member of Congress wants to see this.

So why is it that the Department of Defense is not addressing this? Why aren't they responding to my letters? Why aren't they accepting my invitations to come to their office and talk to them about this?

Another concerned citizen. We live across the street from a locally run independent pharmacy. We strongly believe in supporting local businesses and having the choice of where we get our medical needs. Isn't that what America is supposed to be about? Please do whatever possible to keep our local pharmacy in the network. Local businesses, small businesses, are important to our communities.

Another concerned citizen: We live in a small town with only one pharmacy, which Express Scripts has quit doing business with. Our only other alternatives are pharmacies that are either 20 miles away or 10 miles away. With the price of gas, this just adds another expense to the already high cost of medication.

Bob P. writes: They removed our local pharmacy that was walking distance from our home. We now need to travel several miles for the next pharmacy on the very limited list. This was a surprise when they deleted so many pharmacies off the list.

On and on and on; all of these messages sent to our office. Why were they

sent to our office? Because, obviously, they know I am a pharmacist. Obviously, they know I am working on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, this is despicable. No one should—no American should have to suffer through this, but especially our veterans who sacrificed for our country.

You see the comments back here. We depend on the Coast Guard to do search and rescue. They should be able to obtain their medications from their local pharmacy and pharmacist.

It is like the years of service I gave to this country are no longer appreciated. It is like us veterans are unimportant to this Nation.

Is that the message we want to send? No.

They will no longer have access to our free deliver service or access to a live pharmacist in a timely manner. It is sad, it is dishonest, and greedy on the part of Express Scripts for agreeing to this.

One last letter that we received. Our local independent pharmacy has expertly provided for us and have become like family. Our local neighborhood businesses are very important to community strength and solidarity and cutting them out further weakens the ties that help to keep communities strong and viable. Please strengthen families and communities by reinstating local and independent pharmacies.

That is why, currently, as we speak, the FTC, the Federal Trade Commission, is looking into the impact that the PBMs are having on local independent pharmacies; something that I asked them to do 8 years ago when I first entered Congress.

The first thing I did when I got to Washington, D.C., was to call the FTC and ask them to look at the vertical integration that exists in the drug pricing scenario, where the insurance company owns the PBM that owns the pharmacy.

□ 1430

That is right. Aetna owns Caremark, which owns CVS. Cigna owns Express Scripts PBM, which owns Express Scripts mail order. Then you have United—same thing.

Thank goodness, last summer, the FTC agreed to look at this vertical integration that has caused the prices of prescription drugs to go so high. There was a study done by the Berkeley Research Group last year. It showed, Mr. Speaker, that only 37 percent of the price of a medication goes to the pharmacy manufacturer, which begs the question: Where does the other 63 percent go?

Guess where it goes? It goes to the PBM, the middleman, to Express Scripts, those types of companies. That is where it goes.

Now, look, I am not opposed to anybody making money, but at the same time, tell me the value they are bringing to healthcare. They are not bringing any value to healthcare.

The egregious policies of the PBMs are what are causing prescription drug prices to go up, and now they are cutting out the local independent pharmacies, and now they are penalizing our veterans, causing them to have to drive miles and miles and do without their medication and pay higher prices all to make more profit.

Mr. Speaker, this is why we are here today. It is because of the patients. It is because of our veterans and their families. They are the ones that are suffering. They are the ones that need the Biden administration, who can do something about this and who should do something about this. They are the ones who need them to step up.

These stories should not be our brave servicemembers' reality. We can and must do better.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

REMEMBERING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF HANS "HARRY" FRISCH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 9, 2023, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. RUTHERFORD) for 30 minutes.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of a giant of a man in Jacksonville and in northeast Florida, Mr. Harry Frisch.

Many knew Harry as a very savvy businessman and compassionate philanthropist, but I had the great privilege of getting to know him as a true friend. Harry was the epitome of the American Dream.

He was born July 5, 1923, in Vienna, Austria, and at age 14, he fled the Nazi takeover, traveling to Czechoslovakia and then later fleeing to Israel, where he worked as an auto mechanic and met his loving wife of 68 years, Lilo.

Harry and Lilo then relocated to Jacksonville—with their two sons, Ben and Karl—where Harry began working at his mother's fish business to make ends meet.

Through his diligent work ethic and his warm personality, Harry grew Beaver Street Fisheries into one of the largest seafood processors and distributors in the United States.

Harry's joy was contagious. He felt a deep sense of appreciation for all those who had helped him along the way and made a point of being authentic with everyone that he interacted with.

That is the attitude that helped him develop deep roots across northeast Florida and led him to give back wherever and whenever he could. Harry supported many local nonprofits, like the River Garden Hebrew Home, and several local hospitals, including the Mayo Clinic, St. Vincent's Hospital, and Baptist Hospital.

His reputation earned him a multitude of awards, including a place in the First Coast Business Hall of Fame.

Above all, Harry was a devoted son, brother, husband, father, grandfather,