of cars that already pack New York City's crowded streets would greatly increase.

Pollution and transportation are not issues limited to the northeastern corridor. These are national issues, as well. Amtrak is also a national issue. People all over the country ride on the passenger rail service Amtrak provides.

Mr. Speaker, Amtrak is worth maintaining. We must also recognize that it is in Congress's power to step in and fix this problem.

Mr. Speaker, this issue needs our attention and it needs it now. Congress must pass an aid package that gives Amtrak the tools not only to survive, but also to excel.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 5010, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2003

Mrs. MYRICK, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 107–536) on the resolution (H. Res. 461) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 5010) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2003, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 5011, MILITARY CONSTRUCTION APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2003

Mrs. MYRICK, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 107–537) on the resolution (H. Res. 462) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 5011) making appropriations for military construction, family housing, and base realignment and closure for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2003, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF MOTIONS TO SUSPEND THE RULES

Mrs. MYRICK, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 107–538) on the resolution (H. Res. 463) providing for consideration of motions to suspend the rules, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

THE SKYROCKETING COST OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentlewoman from Florida (Mrs. THURMAN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mrs. THURMAN. Mr. Speaker, tonight we have a group of women here who are very concerned about the prescription drug benefit that we may be voting on this week and with some particular interest in the high cost and skyrocketing cost of prescription drugs in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY), who is a valuable member to our caucus and has been actively involved in the area of prescription drugs.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Florida for yielding to me, who has been such a great leader on an issue that is so important to the 39 million people who are on Medicare. Those are the elderly and persons with disabilities.

A lot of times we come to the floor and we talk about people that are in our districts or people that we have heard about or issues that affect some segment of our society, but not so often do we come to the floor and talk about a problem that affects so many people that also directly impacts our own families.

The issue of the high cost of prescription drugs is hard to escape from, regardless of the income or the position of one's family. I found, much to my surprise, sometime ago that my family was not immune from this particular crisis.

One day I got an e-mail from a cousin of mine that said, ''The reason I am writing you today, I saw you on C–SPAN giving a speech on prescription drugs.'' He said, ''I thought you would be interested in my mom's story.'' This is also my cousin, his mother.

''The last couple of years of my dad's life, he was relying heavily on all sorts of heart medication and other prescription drugs to keep him going and maintain a quality of life.''

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Well, Mom kept on putting those drugs on their credit cards. How else were they going to pay for them? With Social Security? I do not think so.

Well, anyway Mom did everything she could to make sure Dad got his meds. When Dad passed away in January 1998, Mom was left with a mountain of credit card debt. The Tuesday after his funeral, she had to declare bankruptcy. It just does not seem fair. But if you ask Mom, she would do it all over again to have a few more days with Dad.

As we the baby boomers get older and the cost of prescription drugs is skyrocketing, something needs to be done to curb the drug companies. It cannot all be for recouping R and D. Somebody is gouging somebody.

This e-mail was sent to me almost exactly 2 years ago today. And at that time there was not a candidate running for office, particularly for Federal office, who was not promising that something was going to be done about that high cost of prescription drugs. Oh, yes, elect me and I will go to the White House or I will go to the Congress and I will pass a prescription drug benefit for senior citizens. Do not worry, seniors. Vote for me and I will get you a prescription drug benefit. There was not anybody running for any office at the Federal level that did not say that.

Well, those seniors, people in our own families, are still waiting in line for that prescription drug benefit. We are almost through an entire session of Congress, and there still is not a prescription drug benefit. They have been bumped out of their place in line by the airlines who we bailed out a very short time after September 11. They have been displaced from their place in line by a very few rich dead people when we excused them from the estate tax. And now as the front of the line appears closer and closer, maybe they are getting there, what they are offered up by the Republicans is a sham and not a plan, a bill that was written by the drug companies and for the drug companies that does nothing to control the high cost of prescription drugs, provides no guaranteed benefit, there is no predictable premium or copayment, no guarantee even that any insurance company will even offer them the chance to purchase a plan.

A former member, Bill Gradison, who was president of the Health Insurance Association of America from 1993 to 1998, criticized the GOP private market approach to prescription drug coverage saying, ''I am very skeptical that 'drug only' private plans would develop.''

So even those people who are associated with the insurance industry think that there is not going to be such a plan available. That is what the Republicans have offered up.

The Democrats on the other hand, we have a plan that does provide a guaranteed benefit, that is absolutely going to lower the cost of prescription drugs, will lower the cost by enabling the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate a lower price for senior citizens, that says that all the beneficiaries of Medicare, our group just like an HMO or the Veterans Administration, and they will negotiate a lower price for senior citizens, and lower the amount of out-of-pocket costs.

But women, women are the ones who are most affected, that are most hurt by the high cost of prescription drugs just like my cousin was who had to declare bankruptcy. Out-of-pocket spending on prescription drugs by seniors is the single largest out-of-pocket health care component after premium payments.

Older women spend more out of pocket on prescription drugs on average than do older men regardless of the type of supplemental insurance coverage they have. Women on Medicare without supplemental benefits spend almost 40 percent more on prescription drugs than men, and men are spending too much. Older women are less likely than men to have employer-sponsored prescription drug coverage. Women without drug coverage spend more out of pocket on drugs than men. On average older women fill more prescriptions than men each year regardless of