minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. THOMAS. Madam Speaker, as the world now knows, early Saturday morning in his sleep, Buck Owens let go of the tiger's tail. What people probably do not know was what happened on Friday night. Because as Buck usually did, he acted naturally. He went to his Crystal Palace, his dance hall and dining room, had his usual chicken-fried steak Friday evening, and told the staff he did not feel very good and he was going to go home and miss the Friday night performance.

In going out to his car, a car full of people from Bend, Oregon, saw him, and they ran over to him and they said, Buck, we came all of the way down to see you. He turned around and went back in and played the complete first set because he could not disappoint a fan.

He went home and never woke up.

Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor the life of my friend and country music legend, Buck Owens, who passed away on Saturday, March 25, 2006.

With 25 No. 1 songs, Buck had one of the most successful country music careers in history. Known for his trademark red, white and blue guitar, he was on stage nearly every Friday and Saturday night with his band, Buck Owens and the Buckaroos, at his Crystal Palace in Bakersfield. In fact, just hours before he passed away, he had spent the evening performing at the Crystal Palace, closing his portion of the show with his 1969 hit "Big in Vegas."

Alvin Edgar Owens was born to Texas sharecroppers in 1929 and became known as "Buck" at the age of 4 when he nicknamed himself after a mule on the family farm. In 1937, after their trailer hitch broke during their move west, Buck and his family ended up in Phoenix, where they remained for more than a decade. During that time, Buck and his siblings worked in the fields picking cotton and potatoes, which Buck later said, "was where my dream began to take hold . . ."

Buck began regularly playing music in local pubs when he was 16 and, when he moved to Bakersfield in 1951, he quickly found work playing with steel guitarist Dusty Rhodes and then Bill Woods and the Orange Blossom Playboys. While Buck at first played a hollow-body Gibson guitar, after a pawnshop sold his Gibson before he could redeem it, Buck began using a Fender Telecaster electric guitar that made his music unique and eventually became known as the "Bakersfield Sound."

In 1957, Buck signed a recording contract with Capitol Records and in 1958 he cut four original songs, including "Second Fiddle," which eventually reached No. 24 on the Billboard charts. During this time, Buck acquired a one-third interest in a Tacoma, WA, radio station and he remained in the radio business for the rest of his life. In 1959, Buck began doing his own live television show and his television career ultimately included 16 years as a co-host of "Hee-Haw."

Throughout his career, Buck earned the respect of musicians from all different genres of music. In fact, even the Beatles recorded a cover of one of his songs, "Act Naturally," in 1965. In 1996, he was recognized for his accomplishments and was inducted to both the Country Music Hall of Fame and the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame.

Buck was truly a Bakersfield institution, and his No. 1 hit, "Streets of Bakersfield," has become our town's unofficial anthem and our favorite of Buck's songs. However, in addition to our pride in his accomplishments as a performer and businessman, we appreciated Buck's generosity, including his support for Bakersfield College's music program as well as his annual Toys 4 Tots event, Buck Owens Rodeo, and celebrity golf tournament. Bakersfield will not be the same without Buck Owens. He was the heart of the town and will truly be missed.

□ 1915

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MILLER of Michigan). 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.

MEDICARE PART D

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Madam Speaker, well, Congress is temporarily in Washington between breaks, and I don't know how some Members on the other side of the aisle spent theirs, but along with Representative HOOLEY and Representative BLUMENAUER, all of us from Oregon, we spent the day yet going up the length of the Willamette Valley holding meetings in senior centers and other public venues to hear from seniors, senior advocates, people who work with seniors and care about seniors about the experience with the so-called Medicare part D prescription drug benefit.

Now, I heard from the other side of the aisle what a stunning success it is. We are protecting the profits of the pharmaceutical industry. They will get an extra $139 billion in profits. We are subsidizing the insurance industry to offer these plans, plans which can be changed on a weekly basis even though seniors can only sign up for one plan a year.

Yet as great as they say these things are, about half the seniors in my State and across America who were not mandatorily enrolled are not yet participating in the plans, in part, because in my little State, there are some 46 plans in my district, I guess in Portland a few more, so there are actually a total of 96 variants available to seniors.

They describe to us what happens when you go on these sites, these are the advocates, not the seniors. You will get, and there will be a little tiny asterisk by certain drugs, and they have given you some plans that might be good for you because you need a plan that will pay for the drugs your doctor has prescribed.

If you hit the little tiny asterisk, then a drop-down window comes out. Most seniors don't know about drop-down windows. The drop-down window says limits may apply. It turns out the limits might be you take 60 of those twice, two a day. The limit might be one a day, but it is not very explicit about that. When you call the 1–800 number, you can't get a human being to get information. So seniors are, for the most part, totally confused. They are having trouble, even when they try to focus in on a plan that might give them help, getting to a point where they can make a choice.

Of course, even if they do choose a plan that pays for that plan, that plan can change the drug benefit on a weekly basis, not something that a senior can do.

Now, we also heard from a small pharmacist, because of the confusion in the transition for the dual eligibles, her pharmacy, her little pharmacy, had to front $45,000 in prescriptions to seniors and has yet to be reimbursed. The reimbursements are starting to trickle in. She had spent 8 hours the day before trying to reconcile some of those to the actual outlays in the drugs that she had fronted for her seniors.

We heard time and time again about problems. My doctor has hired an additional person to try and deal with all the prior approvals required for seniors who have been taking a drug for years, many of these new plans will require all sorts of documentation on why they should get that drug. Many seniors don't know, who have already subscribed, that they are temporarily getting their old drugs until the 1st of April. On the 1st of April, they will fall under their new plan's mandates, and they may not be able to continue taking the drug their doctor has prescribed.

Minimally, Congress should revisit this punitive time limit. The time limit, you have to sign up by May 15, or we will penalize you. They say 1 percent per month; but guess what, you can't sign up again until next fall.

Any senior who doesn't sign up by May 15 will be penalized 6 percent tax, 6 percent extra for life as a bonus to the already subsidized insurance companies on top of their premium. That is not fair. Congress should undo that arbitrary mandate. That was to try and stampede seniors into plans that they don't understand that they might not want, and that should go.

But then perhaps we should do what the head of Walgreens has suggested. He said there are so many plans out there, so many benefits, so many formularies, his pharmacist can't figure it out.

Like Congress did 25 years ago, he says Congress should standardize these plans and say, there will be five or 10 plans out there with standard benefits, so everybody can understand what the 10 options are. They can just learn 10 options and then let the private companies compete over price, perhaps without a subsidy from the taxpayers.

Or, God forbid, we could actually take on the pharmaceutical industry

since the drug prices under these plans are actually on average higher than the prices offered by Costco. What a great deal. The President likes to talk about how these insurance companies, or PBMs, how they have just bargained so hard and driven down the prices. They are only 50 percent higher than the prices that the VA gets through negotiations for our veterans. But the Republicans outlawed, they outlawed, Medicare bargaining lower drug prices on behalf of Medicare beneficiaries.

Now, who does that help? They said that was un-American to negotiate lower drug prices. It is not un-American to give huge windfall benefits to the pharmaceutical industry.

MARKING 185 YEARS OF GREEK INDEPENDENCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to address the House in honor of Greek Independence Day that was celebrated on March 25. Greek freedom fighters brought sovereignty back to their country, 185 years ago, allowing the Greek people to decide their fate for themselves again.

I speak here today to honor all persons and nations who have successfully fought for their right to live according to the rules of democracy and freedom, denying the rule of tyranny and autocracy. As the oldest democracy in the world, the Greek nation has passionately struggled to uphold democracy as its form of government.

The significance emanating from the year 1821 is outstanding, not only in the Greek context, but also as a strong symbol of the inspiration one brave nation can provide to the world.

When in 1821 the Greek people regained their independence, more than four centuries of occupation and oppression by the Ottoman Empire came to an end. The peoples of the Balkans were soon to follow the Greek example and sought freedom from the Ottoman rule.

The courage and vision of the Greek freedom fighters also transcended the borders of the former Ottoman Empire. The independence movement received broad support from intellectuals abroad, including English poet Lord Byron and U.S. Senator and Secretary of State Daniel Webster.

The Greek flag symbolizes the legacy of 1821. The cross in the upper left part of the flag stands for the Greek Orthodox Church, which significantly helped Greeks to preserve their ethnic, cultural, and linguistic heritage during the years of occupation. The cross is embedded by nine alternating blue and white stripes, each representing one letter of the Greek word for freedom. While the flag was developed in the early days of independence, it took more than 150 years before it became the official Greek flag.

After the end of the Ottoman occupation, Greeks had to struggle for another century before their land was truly freed. In the 1970s, Greeks once again fought for freedom and independence, stripping off a 7-year rule by a military junta. Shortly after democracy had been reestablished, the Greek nation finally adopted the cross-and-nine-stripe flag as its official flag.

The United States is a proud partner of the Greek nation, which has given the gift of democracy to the world, and which throughout history has fought to uphold this gift as its guiding principle. Greeks and Americans share a common vision to have everyone on this planet enjoy the gift of freedom and democracy. Greece is one of our strongest allies in the international war against terror.

The United States and Greece have consistently joined forces to fight the global threats of terrorism and state-sponsored terrorism, nuclear proliferation, illegal narcotics, and international crime. As a strong NATO ally, the Greek military has taken on a strong and abiding commitment in Afghanistan as well.

Greece has given the United States both military and financial support for Operation Enduring Freedom. It contributes to it is International Security Assistance Force and has pledged to fund educational programs.

Located on shores of the Mediterranean Sea, Greece is of the greatest geopolitical importance. Neighboring with the Balkans, it serves as a shining beacon of peace and stability in the region. Bordering with Turkey, it serves as the bridge to the Muslim world.

I commend Greece for its strong work in the Middle East Partnership Initiative, MEPI, and its strong participation in the Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative.

However, many pressing issues in the region remain unresolved, Madam Speaker. The ongoing conflict over the final name of the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia causes grave concern, just as it grieves me to see the continued division of Cyprus and the unbalanced approach that has been taken to overcome this division.

I hope that we will soon be able to witness the end of the occupation and a reunification of Cyprus on fair and equitable terms. The emergence of a strong, vibrant and justly unified Cyprus would provide stability, both politically and economically, to the Mediterranean region.

I urge Congress remain engaged in the search for a just and lasting reunification that will promote peace and stability. Recalling the Greek routes of democracy, I am proud to represent the interests of my Greek American constituency. With currently 1.5 million members, the Greek American community contributes significantly to the prosperity of our Nation.

Madam Speaker, I am proud of the friendship that binds the United States, the land of freedom, and Greece, the country of freedom fighters.

Together, we can promote democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights worldwide.

ORDINARY WOMEN, EXTRAORDINARY LIVES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Speaker, in recognition of Women's History Month of 2006, we recognize and celebrate the contributions of great American heroines who have built a legacy for women leadership over the 230 years of our Nation's history.

In celebration of this year's Women's History Month theme, ''Women: Builders of Communities and Dreams,'' I call upon each of us to dedicate ourselves to making the future for all of America's girls and women full of hope and opportunity.

Today I salute the work of two extraordinary women and two exceptional young girls from Florida's 20th Congressional district. But first I would like to commend Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of the Republic of Liberia, who addressed the Congress just last week. She represents the aspirations and expectations of women in Liberia, Africa and women all over the world.

Now I would like to recognize two young women from the 20th District of Florida, Taryn Daley of Davie and Katie Bonilla of Weston, who started 10 lemonade stands to raise money for pediatric cancer research.

Taryn, 12, and Katie, 11, were inspired by their mitzvah project, which is a part of their bat mitzvah requirements of public service and a national program known as Alex's Lemonade Stand, an idea started by a young girl named Alexandria ''Alex'' Scott who was diagnosed with an aggressive childhood cancer.

In less than 2 weeks, Madam Speaker, Taryn and Katie found more than 30 volunteers, enlisted a group of sponsors, and raised $3,000 to fight childhood cancer. These two young ladies are proof that this generation of young women are dream builders. Their courage and compassion gives us all hope for a brighter future. They will inspire more young women to make the world a better place.

Next I would like to recognize the City of North Miami Beach police chief and president of the Miami-Dade Association of Chiefs of Police, Linda Loizzo. Linda is a true trailblazer. She has served the North Miami Beach Police Department for 32 years in a number of capacities: deputy chief, assistant chief of operations, major in charge of administrative services, commander in charge of the investigative division, and supervisor of several special support services units.