COMMEMORATING THE THIRTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE APOLLO 11 MOON LANDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WELDON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Madam Speaker, 30 years ago today history was made. For the first time homo sapiens took their first steps on a new world. Thirty years ago today, American know-how and technological might was demonstrated in a way that benefited every human on this planet. Thirty years ago we aimed higher than ever and accomplished that goal.

The names Michael Collins, Buzz Aldrin, and Neal Armstrong will forever be etched in the edifice of human history, next to the names of Columbus and Lindbergh.

We all know the phrases, ''The Eagle has landed,'' and ''That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.'' Most of us can remember where we were at the time when the Eagle did make that landing. The magic of television helped us all feel like we were part of what was going on on the Moon.

I remember well where I was. I sat in my living room with my mother and father and my three sisters, each of us glued to the television set in disbelief that we had actually lived to see people, humans, setting foot on another planet.

Our efforts into space have an uncanny ability to unite all people and excite the imagination like nothing else. One of the privileges that I have had in serving in this position is the opportunity to travel and meet many teachers, and they all tell me, the thing that they find that most excites their young students to study math and science is our space program, particularly our manned spaceflight program.

As we all know, today in America the majority of the new high-paying jobs are being created in high technology industries like the computing industry, and those jobs are dependent on America producing young people ready to go into the workplace with skills in math and science.

Indeed, the computing industry is so big that it is generating jobs for artists, for marketers, and for other people who do not traditionally study in the sciences. Many of these jobs are dependent on motivating our kids. There is nothing that motivates our kids more than our space program.

Today I am proud to say that the shuttle Columbia is now preparing to leave the Earth later this week on a mission to deploy a new space-based telescope, a telescope that will aid in our understanding of our place in the universe.

Madam Speaker, we should be proud of our space program, and on this day, the 30th anniversary of the first manned lunar mission, we should continue and remember to support our space program to the fullest extent possible.

PRICE DIFFERENTIALS IN PRESCRIPTION DRUGS ARE A FORM OF PRICE DISCRIMINATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. WISE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WISE. Today I am releasing the results of a report that we have done, a study that we have done, an international comparison of retail prescription drug prices and the rate that West Virginia senior citizens pay versus what a citizen would pay in Mexico or Canada for the same prescription drug.

The results are astounding. What we have concluded is that West Virginia senior citizens, and incidentally, this is true for all senior citizens across the country, West Virginia senior citizens pay significantly higher retail prices for prescription drugs than consumers in either Canada or Mexico.

This also applies to other nations as well. We chose Canada and Mexico as ones that we could survey easily. For instance, in Canada, West Virginia senior citizens will pay, on the average, the average retail price difference will be 99 percent more for certain prescription drugs than the Canadian citizen will pay. A West Virginia senior citizen will pay 94 percent more than a citizen in Mexico for the same drug.

We took five prescription drugs, and these are not generic medications, five prescription drugs that are the five patented non-generic drugs with the highest annual sales to senior citizens in 1997. They are Zocor, Prilosec, Procardia XL, Zoloft, and Norvasc.

If we look at just the top two, Zocor, these are prescription drugs that our senior citizens need the most and buy the most. If we look at Zocor, the Canadian retail price for the particular dosage is $46.14. If we look at the Mexican retail price, $63.15 cents. If we look at the West Virginia senior citizen out-of-pocket price, it is $114.48. Prilosec, that is $54.87 to the Canadian consumer, $39.47 to the Mexican consumer, and $127.34 to the West Virginia consumer.

So the price differential, once again, between Canada and West Virginia is 132 percent, between Mexico and West Virginia is 223 percent, as illustrated in the chart I have here, with Canadian price in blue, the Mexican price in red, and the West Virginia senior citizen price in beige.

We looked at two other medications as well, Synthroid and Micronase. We found in those particular cases that West Virginia consumers would be paying three times, and in one case as much as nine times, more than their Canadian and Mexican counterparts. This simply is not fair, Madam Speaker. Senior citizens in West Virginia should not have to go to Toronto or Tijuana to do their prescription drug buying. Why is it that Zocor costs more for a senior citizen in Martinsburg or Maronette, West Virginia, than it does for a citizen in Montreal or Mexico City?

Two weeks ago I issued a report comparing prices that a West Virginia senior citizen would pay versus what the prescription drug companies were charging their most favored customers, HMOs, insurance companies, and the Federal Government. The results were exactly the same. It does not matter where we are, apparently, in the world, maybe in the universe, but if you are a West Virginia senior citizen, you are going to be paying more out of pocket than the favored customers who negotiate lower rates with the prescription drug companies, or even consumers in foreign countries.

I object what some are going to say. They are going to say, but, Congressman, the production cost of that medication is different in Mexico or Connecticut or wherever else it is being purchased. GAO looked at this in 1992 and concluded that production and distribution and research and development costs did not account for this large price differential; that indeed, it was simply a markup.

Indeed, I question whether the prescription drug companies are even spreading those research and development costs across the entire world consumer base. My study shows, and incidentally, let me just thank very much the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN), the ranking member of the Committee on Government Reform and Oversight, and his staff who provided much of the background and did much of the analysis for this study.

What our study shows, though, is that people who need the prescription drugs the most, the senior citizens in our country, and who have the least ability to pay end up paying the most. Why? Because the prescription drug companies engage in differential pricing. These folks, the senior citizens, are the ones who pay out of pocket. They are the ones who are paying the bulk of this.

Mine is not the only report that illustrates this. Look at the Canadian Patented Medicine Price Report. I would just say in closing, Madam Speaker, that clearly West Virginia senior citizens are paying far too much out of pocket for the same prescriptions that their counterparts are paying in other parts of the country and the world.

WILL WE SQUANDER OUR SURPLUSES?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Madam Speaker, I am sure everybody this morning has heard all about the surpluses we have here.

We have had the Office of Management and Budget, which is the arm of the White House, indicate that there will be $1 trillion in surpluses over the next 15 years, and we have heard information from the CBO, which is the arm of Congress, also saying there will be a huge amount of surpluses.

My concern this morning is that the spending that we are talking about here in Congress is increasing, and I hear all the new programs that the President is proposing, so I am concerned. I thought I would bring my concerns to the floor today to discuss with my colleagues a couple of things we should concern ourselves with.

When the Congressional Budget Office and the Office of Management and Budget made their forecast, they used the assumption that none of the spending increases would break the budget caps; that is, the spending limits set by the 1997 Balanced Budget Agreement would be held intact.

I think we all know here this morning that we have already broken the budget caps in some ways, and many of us feel that, in certain areas, we should. But there are several factors that must be in place in order for these optimistic forecasts that CBO and OMB have projected to become reality.

Besides holding within the caps from the 1997 Balanced Budget Agreement, there is a built-in assumption in both these organizations that the economy will continue to chug along with a growth rate of 2.5 percent a year until the year 2008. In other words, there is nothing built in in that case that we have a recession. Maybe we will not have a recession, but there is a possibility that if we do not have a recession, at least the economy will slow down.

Madam Speaker, today we have two assumptions that are built into the CBO and the OMB's projection; one, that we will stay within the budget caps, and two, no recession or economic downturn will occur over 10 years, possibly 15 years. My colleagues, both of those assumptions are difficult to believe under today's realities.

The 1997 budget agreement set tight spending controls on the growth of discretionary spending. Discretionary spending accounts for a great deal of the spending by the Federal Government, and the portion of the budget that the folks here in Congress can control. It includes but is not limited to such items as the Department of Education, the FBI, disaster relief, and all these other programs.

If we adhere to the spending caps, then everything will be fine, but that is a big if. As I mentioned earlier, the only problem is that Congress is already having a difficult time in keeping it within the limits set by the Balanced Budget Act of 1997. Is it realistic to think that in the year 2009, that is part of the projection of these organizations, that there will only be an 11 percent increase in spending? That is just a little over 1 percent a year.

Let us go back in history and take a look at how that compares to what we did in the last 11 years. From 1987 to 1998, discretionary spending rose by 75 percent. That is just a little under 7 percent. So I say to my colleagues, even the projection that these organizations are providing and we in Congress are assuming, that discretionary spending will increase by 1 percent, is not accurate, because in the past it has been almost 7 percent.

So we have some real difficulties that are looming before us. The appropriators have already indicated they cannot stay within the limits imposed by the 1997 budget. Therefore, if domestic spending should begin to rise, then the interest payments on the debt will not decline. If the surplus starts to decline, then the debt in turn will increase, and interest payments will continue to increase, also.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, the two assumptions that CBO and OMB have used have great validity only if they come true. The first assumption is that we will stay within the budget caps. As we know, we have already broken the budget caps in certain areas, and I expect we will probably break them again.

The second assumption is that there will be no recession in the next 10 to 15 years. That too is not realistic. I caution my colleagues that we need to try, as much as possible, to control spending because I think the Balanced Budget Agreement set us on the right course. I hope we will not deviate, and try to restrain spending.

I call upon the President also. For every new program that he offers us, he has to come up with a way to offset it. We must hold the line on spending, and if we do these things, hold the line on spending and continue to reduce taxes, I think that we can look at surplus into the future.

AN IRRESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL FREEDOM ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. DOGGETT) is recognized during morning hour debates for 4 minutes.

Mr. DOGGETT. Madam Speaker, let me just say that I want to associate myself fully with the remarks just made by my Republican colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS). He made some excellent points.

Though it may not have been intended, I think he makes a very compelling case for how extremely irresponsible the Republican so-called Financial Freedom Act is that is to be presented on this floor tomorrow.

I, as a person who has for the last several sessions been among the leading deficit hawks, according to the Concord Coalition, refer to the comments of the founders of that organization, Warren Rudman, a former Republican Senator who wrote just within the last week remarks very similar to our Republican colleague, the gentleman from Florida, in saying that the surplus is only a projection that cannot be spent.

If spending is increased, and he adds something my colleague, the gentleman from Florida, failed to mention, our taxes are cut based on the expectation of large surpluses, and the projection turns out to be wrong, deficits easily could reappear where surpluses are now forecast. Most economists have therefore advised that the best thing to do with the surplus is to pay down the debt, or to deal with this problem of the retirement security through security accounts.

I believe that is correct. If we are to dissipate a surplus that may not even exist over the course of the next 10 years, we will be back into the years of Reagan red ink, where we have more and more deficits which we are finally, through responsible policies, being able to work ourselves out of.

I think, though there is substantial competition in this Congress, it is very difficult to find anything more irresponsible than the so-called Financial Freedom Act. It is really a bill that ought to be called ''the Freedom From Financial Reality Act,'' because it disregards the very realities our colleague, the gentleman from Florida, has just been pointing to.

This bill proposes to have essentially a $1 trillion tax cut. It is the equivalent, in terms of financial responsibility, of our Republican colleagues piloting the SS Titanic through the deficits ahead, and the dance band playing the tune of ''We don't believe in icebergs,'' or in this case, ''We don't believe in deficits.''

So irresponsible has their path been that they now find themselves proposing to reduce their own tax cut I think it is by approximately $72 billion, because they have exceeded their own irresponsible budget resolution, as noted by our colleagues across the Capitol.

But shaving off $72 billion from a bill that is as irresponsible as the one our House Republican colleagues have proposed is little more than the equivalent of tossing the deck chairs off the Titanic after the iceberg has been hit.

We face very perilous times if this Republican proposal is advanced, because it threatens the very security of our economic expansion. We have an unparalleled economic expansion going on at present in this country. Families all throughout this Nation have benefited in varying degrees, many just now beginning to share in the benefits of this economic expansion, and to threaten that by going back to the old deficit approach I think would be a real mistake.

It is that same threat of irresponsible action in this Republican tax bill that also jeopardizes our ability to assure the security of Medicare and social security, and to address the concerns that our colleague, the gentleman from