pleased to continue that more here today.

In the 1990s, as Secretary of State of Rhode Island, I led the effort to upgrade our State's voting equipment, and I know firsthand the benefits that modernized election systems can have on voter turnout and civic participation. I encourage my colleagues to support this motion to instruct so that we can realize the vision of the Help America Vote Act and restore confidence in our Nation's elections.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding me time.

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my good friend, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) for his comments and my thanks for his extraordinary work on behalf of America and all of us. And I apologize for the faux pas. I guess I had the primary on the brain and did not recognize the great State of Rhode Island but no offense was meant.

Mr. Speaker, I did not offer this motion to instruct to rehash the 2000 election debacle. We have plenty of opportunity to do that in 2004. But I did offer the motion to highlight and remind Members of the commitment that this body made last year to reform our country's election system. I offered this motion so that the thousands of my constituents and others around the U.S. who were demonized, demoralized and disenfranchised after the 2000 election can go to bed tonight knowing that Congress is serious about ensuring their votes are not only counted but actually count.

I have already introduced the next generations of election reform in the form of the Voter Outreach and Turnout Expansion Act. The VOTE Act allows no excuse absentee voting, requires early voting opportunities, not less than 3 weeks prior to the general election day, requires adequate notification to voters who submit incomplete voter registration forms by mail, treat election day as a Federal holiday, and provides leave time for private employees to vote on Election Day.

These are the ideas of the present, and we task ourselves in making them the realities of the future.

Mr. Speaker, States are eager to implement the improvements required by the law, but they have insufficient resources to meet these goals. Today, we will reaffirm our commitment and appropriate the necessary funding to the Help America Vote Act that Congress guaranteed to States last year.

A dependable and reliable election system remains the linchpin in the integrity of our democracy, and we have no choice but to protect it. I urge my colleagues to vote yes on this motion to instruct.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ROGERS of Alabama). Without objection, the previous question is ordered on the motion to instruct.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion to instruct offered by the gentleman from Florida (Mr. HASTINGS).

The motion to instruct was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

SENIORS DESERVE BETTER PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE

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

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, last night I took a special order, and I talked about what seniors are going to pay under the new Medicare prescription drug program if it is passed in its present form; and I understand it is coming out of committee just a little bit different than that we said last night, but the end result is the same. They are changing the annual deductible from $275 to $250, but the seniors will be paying 25 percent of the next $2,250 minus the annual deductible. So the seniors for $1,500 in coverage will be paying $1,170, and that is not well known by most of the seniors with whom I have talked. And then there is a doughnut hole which goes up to $5,100, and seniors will pay an additional $2,850 with no coverage for that.

That means seniors up to $5,100 under the new prescription drug benefit will pay $4,020 and the government will pay $1,500.

Now, that is not what I think seniors are expecting. I think they are expecting coverage that is much broader than that; and I think they are going to be very unpleasantly surprised when they realize that they will be paying a tremendous amount of money for very small amount of coverage.

Now, above the $5,000 level, the catastrophic health care benefit kicks in, and that is 95 percent of that. But the average senior pays about $1,800 year in prescription drug costs, and they will not reach that level. There will be very few that reach that level. So most seniors, if they pay $5,000 for their prescription drugs in a given year, the average senior, they will pay $4,020 and the Federal Government will pay $1,500. I think they will be very angry when they find out that is the case.

I believe we should pass a bill that takes care of those who are uninsured, who do not have prescription drug coverage. Right now, 76 percent of American seniors have some form of prescription drug coverage. And the program that we are talking about in most cases is going to give them less coverage than what they already have. Now, the 24 percent of the seniors that do not have coverage, we should deal with them. We should help them. Those who are indigent, those who have health problems where they cannot get coverage, we need to take care of those. But those who are already covered, I do not believe our government should start taking care of.

The cost of this program is estimated to be somewhere around $400 billion over 10 years. I have another chart which I am not bring forward right now, but it shows what happened with Medicare. Medicare when it was passed in 1965 cost $3 billion. Two years ago in the year 2001, Medicare cost $241 billion. That is an 80 times increase.

□ 2045

It went up 80 times since 1964. The Medicaid program which we passed in Indiana under duress started out, we thought, costing a few million. We estimated a top figure of $20 million. It has cost well over $1 billion just for Indiana's share, and it has gone up about 70 times since 1969.

Anybody who thinks that this donut hole is not going to be a big issue to seniors is sorely mistaken, in my opinion; and I believe that they will demand that this donut hole, this $2,850 that is not covered, will shrink. When that happens, there is going to be a tremendous increase in the cost of this program. I believe the $400 billion price tag for 10 years is very low. I believe it will be more than double that, maybe up to $1 trillion over 10 years, but only time will tell.

The other thing that really concerns me is we are paying $70 billion to American industry so that they will not dump their retired employees on the Federal Government program. The fact of the matter is I believe long term the businessmen and industrialists in this country are going to say we do not know what Congress is going to do tomorrow, and they are going to start dumping their employees on the Federal program anyhow; and when that happens, the retirees are going to see the program that they are under with their previous employer go out the window, and they are going to be put on the government program.

Their coverage right now under their retired benefits with their previous employer is probably much, much better.