

IMMIGRATION POLICY

HON. STEVE KING

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 19, 2004

Mr. KING of Iowa. Mr. Speaker, I wholly support an immigration policy designed to enhance the economic, social and cultural well-being of the United States of America. I am looking forward to working on immigration policy as a member of the Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security, and Claims. I intend to carry out the responsibility for crafting the immigration and naturalization policy that was delegated to Congress by our Constitution.

Immigrants have made, and will continue to make, a valuable contribution to our Nation. I will work to develop an immigration policy that aids in the assimilation of newcomers by ensuring that the United States does not admit more immigrants than it can reasonably accommodate. Assimilation is valuable to immigrants who benefit from our shared American culture of personal responsibility, freedom and patriotism. The values shared by our civilization, founded on a heritage of western civilization, religious freedom and free enterprise capitalism, serve immigrants and native born alike. I am concerned that the recent rise in immigration levels in this country will make it difficult for newcomers to assimilate and find jobs. We must ensure cultural continuity for our great Nation.

As Americans, we should promote a naturalization process that promotes American values, the responsibilities of citizenship and our constitutional principles. We must be careful to admit only as many newcomers as we can accommodate with jobs so that our society will not be burdened by unemployed immigrants.

Candidates for naturalization should be proficient in the English language. Not only will English proficiency help newcomers attain better paying jobs, it also provides a means of communication with all Americans. For this reason, I have recently introduced the English Language Unity Act of 2003, H.R. 997 to declare English the official language of the United States.

Finally, as a sovereign nation, we must control our borders. We must ensure that terrorists do not infiltrate the United States. We must tighten and strengthen border control efforts so that illegal aliens do not enter our country. I support elimination of the visa lottery which gives randomly selected individuals visas, when many law abiding would-be immigrants are waiting to have their applications approved. I am also concerned about the enforcement of immigration laws within our borders.

I hope that this Congress will be vigilant in our oversight of the enforcement of existing immigration laws and make necessary changes to existing laws.

RECOGNIZING KATE A. SCANNELL, MD FOR HER ARTICLE "DELIRIOUSLY DUMBFOUNDING DRUG DISCOUNT CARDS"

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 19, 2004

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Kate A. Scannell, MD for bringing to light many of the shortcomings of the Medicare drug discount card program. Dr. Scannell is not only a respected geriatrician in the Bay Area, she is also a noted medical ethicist and author. With years of experience delivering services to Medicare beneficiaries, there is no one more qualified to pass judgment on the Medicare drug card program than Dr. Scannell. I appreciate her honesty, and willingness to stand up and inform people in my district about the confusing and wasteful drug card policy.

It is with pleasure that I submit the attached article, "Deliriously Dumbfounding Drug Discount Cards," for inclusion in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. The article originally appeared in the May 16, 2004 edition of *The Argus* (Fremont, CA).

DELIRIOUSLY DUMBFOUNDING DRUG DISCOUNT CARDS

(By Kate Scannell)

Medicare officials call it the "drug discount card"—a code phrase referring to a small piece of paper that has the capacity to blow up your mind and destroy your sanity. These "drug discount cards" or "DDCs"—also known as "deliriously dumbfounding cards"—are supposed to offer pharmaceutical discounts between 10 to 25 percent to Medicare enrollees who have no prescription drug coverage. However:

The DDCs were launched last week when the federal government initiated its new "discount drug program" or "DDP"—otherwise known as "Doing a Darn Pittance" about outlandishly high drug costs. While the official stated mission of the DDP is to make drugs more affordable for elderly and disabled Medicare recipients, in practice the system is cumbersome, confusing and inefficient.

The new program also smells like a political ploy during an election year. By giving Medicare enrollees a card to make it appear as though they had some control over out-of-control drug costs, the DDP functions to distract everyone from the root causes of excessively high drug prices: profit-driven pharmaceutical companies that wildly overcharge for medications, and a federal government that can't (or won't) help to control drug prices.

Here's how the new card system and drug program operate. The DDP requires that elderly or disabled Medicare enrollees first try to obtain "the card." Here we encounter our first daunting hurdle, in that there exists not one but many cards from which to choose. Medicare enrollees must select a single card from among at least 40 companies and organizations that have been approved by the Department of Health and Human Services to distribute them.

Fortunately, all our elderly and disabled Medicare patients are tech-savvy, and they own personal computers equipped with Internet services which they can navigate freely for the necessary comparison shopping.

Those Medicare patients will also want to print out Excel spreadsheets to help them sort out the fine details, because each card

provides different savings on different medications. And it would be wise to keep a copy of the spreadsheet in a readily accessible location, because the companies can change the prices of those drugs at any time.

I have heard nothing but disappointment, confusion, frustration and anxiety voiced by Medicare enrollees who are trying to make sense of the president's drug card program. Its inhospitable and labyrinthine structure defies the will and the capacity of people to negotiate it.

To make matters worse, the new Medicare Web site (www.medicare.gov) unveiled last month by the Bush administration contains substantial inaccuracies and errors. Proposing to offer helpful information about the DDP and drug price comparisons, the site was found to be riddled with erroneous information and incorrect prices. For example, a spokeswoman for Walgreen's reported that about half their drug prices were listed inaccurately. To rub more salt into the wound, the prices of drugs from Canada tended to run below those offered by the Medicare discount cards.

Finally, millions of Medicare patients will spend many precious hours trying to choose the best card and to decipher the DDP when the stunning fact remains that the entire program is scheduled to end in January 2006. At that point, we will be under the thumb of the disastrous Medicare Drug Bill—the subject of my first installment of "Weapons of Medicare Destruction." In that piece, I wrote about the sweetheart deals our government made with the politically powerful pharmaceutical companies. Most notable and mind-boggling was our government's forfeiting its right to bargain with drug companies for price reductions on the drugs it offered through the Medicare program.

Further illustrating the unhealthy collusion between our government and the pharmaceutical industry, last week the *New York Times* reported that employees at companies that the Bush administration certified to distribute the drug discount cards already contributed almost \$1.8 million to Republican candidates in this year's election. This included a \$275,000 contribution to Bush's reelection campaign.

The drug discount card system exacts a phenomenal waste of effort and time and money that would have been better spent in a more cost-efficient manner by creating direct subsidies to Medicare recipients—like automatic rebate cards.

Still, we must be wary of any surface deceit offering "discounts" because it only masks the real problem: unregulated pharmaceutical costs that are driving our seniors into poverty or to Canada.

The fact is that "discounts" are easily "discounted" by the drug companies.

They can bump up the price of any drug and wipe out the effect of any apparent discount.

I urge everyone to become "Armchair Activists" and to contact their legislators by phone or e-mail to voice concern about prescription drug costs and our government's conflicted relationship with the drug industry. This is not a time to be "discounted."

HONORING CORPORAL WILLIAM A. SYDNOR

HON. JOSEPH M. HOFFEL

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 19, 2004

Mr. HOFFEL. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the Corporal William A.