

No nation alters its borders per technological developments.

HELP SENIORS RECOGNIZE THE BENEFITS OF THE DRUG DISCOUNT CARD

HON. MIKE FERGUSON

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 2004

Mr. FERGUSON. Mr. Speaker, today we are here to discuss the immediate savings that our nation's seniors realize due to the prescription drug discount cards provided by the Medicare Law that Congress wrote last year. After years of promises, this law fulfills our commitment to our nation's seniors by providing the first ever universal prescription drug benefit under Medicare.

One would think that these new benefits for seniors, coupled with the prescription drug discount card would be a cause for celebration. Rather than educate seniors on the benefits of the discount cards, the other side of aisle has continued to play politics with this issue and resorted to scare tactic towards our nation's seniors and in some cases suggest that seniors are too dumb to make decisions for themselves. There are even those who are discouraging seniors from signing up for the discount card. Perhaps because if seniors sign up, the program will be a success; that is not just wrong, it is unconscionable and shameful, and anyone who engages in that sort of behavior should be ashamed of themselves.

In my home state of New Jersey we have a very generous state pharmaceutical assistance program called PAAD. After working with our Governor and CMS, New Jersey has the opportunity to directly enroll seniors into the discount card program. Out of the 81,000 seniors and persons with disabilities who were eligible for the transition assistance provided by the discount card, only 350 opted out of the program. As a result of the discount card and our delegation's work to get this card to New Jersey's seniors, my state will save \$90 million on the cost of prescription drugs. These savings can be put back into the PAAD program to provide expanded coverage for additional seniors. New Jersey is one example that I encourage more states to follow. By putting partisan politics aside, our delegation worked with CMS to provide a simple process which benefits our state and our state's seniors.

Defying logic, today and in the future, you will hear members on the other side of the aisle argue that the cost of prescription drugs will increase as a result of the discount card. For those members I would like to point to a May 14th study by CMS which shows that in the past week more cards have offered increase discounts for our nation's seniors compared to prices offered the previous week. Sponsors are now comparing their discounts to their competitors, more cards are offering favorable prices, and CMS is working with card sponsors to make sure that the best discounts are published for Medicare beneficiaries. This is what happens when competition is injected into the marketplace. That's how markets work. Some on the other side of the aisle would prefer a government run, command and control system where bureaucrats or politicians tell people what medicines they

can have, how much they can have and when and where they can have it. That sounds more like the former Soviet Union to me.

Today you will also hear members who will criticize the pharmaceutical industry for charging too much for prescription drugs. Yet they will not mention the miracle drugs or treatments these companies create. Representing the scientists and researchers who live in my district of New Jersey, I would like to highlight the good work that two of the pharmaceutical companies are doing to help seniors. Once a low-income beneficiary has exhausted his or her annual \$600 transitional assistance allowance, Merck and Johnson and Johnson will provide its medicines free to that beneficiary's participating discount card plan or directly to the beneficiary, through the pharmacy. Neither company will receive any fees from these programs.

In closing, I encourage all members to put aside partisan politics and help seniors recognize the benefits of the drug discount card. This can be accomplished by working with CMS to clarify any questions our seniors may have and allowing seniors to realize the discounts that are available to all seniors through the discount card.

NATIONAL SMALL BUSINESS WEEK

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 2004

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this is National Small Business Week; a time to celebrate and recognize America's small business entrepreneurs.

I honor our nation's 23 million small businesses and recognize their vital contribution to our nation. I want to especially thank my good friend, Congresswoman NYDIA VELÁZQUEZ from New York and applaud my House colleagues for their hard work on behalf of small business. Additionally, I thank the many small business owners for their numerous contributions.

Small business is the backbone of our state and national economy. Unfortunately, many small businesses are suffering in these trying financial times. Government contracts and spending are a vital source of revenue, and have become even more so during this current economic slump. Small businesses lack high powered lobbyists, therefore it is imperative that all levels of government continue to pay diligent attention to small business in their purchasing and contracts. It is important that we ensure that businesses of all sizes have access to government contracts regardless of their ability to buy influence.

As Congress continues its work, I will dedicate myself to assuring that good news is on the way for small businesses. Both our federal and state government have an obligation to aid, assist and protect the interests of small businesses. The future of America depends on it. I will continue to strongly support federal programs that benefit small businesses.

OSTEOPOROSIS PREVENTION AND AWARENESS MONTH

HON. SHELLEY BERKLEY

OF NEVADA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 2004

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, May is Osteoporosis Prevention and Awareness Month. Osteoporosis and low bone density affects over 44 million Americans over the age of 50, many of whom were unaware of their risk for osteoporosis and were not able to take steps to prevent it. While both men and women are at-risk of developing osteoporosis, women comprise 80 percent of those who develop the disease. Even though the risk of a hip fracture for a woman is equal to her combined risk of breast, uterine, and ovarian cancer, most adult women are unaware of the risk factors for osteoporosis.

Like many Americans, I had no idea I was at risk for developing osteoporosis. I believed I simply had bad posture and was reluctant to be screened for osteoporosis. Yet, as I was running for Congress in 1998, I was diagnosed with this disease.

Fortunately, within 10 months of treatment I was able to stop my bone density loss and my bones actually began to strengthen again. Because of my personal experience with osteoporosis, I am committed to ensuring Americans are aware of the importance of strong bones, so they can reduce their chances of developing the disease.

I commend the National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF) for their efforts to educate the public during the month of May. This month, the NOF has reached out to healthcare providers and consumers with the message, "Osteoporosis. Chances are . . . it could be you." Throughout the year, the NOF is dedicated to promoting lifelong bone health in order to reduce the prevalence of osteoporosis and osteoporosis related fractures and they continue to work to find a cure for the disease through research, education, and advocacy. For all those who have this disease and those who may in the future, I will continue to work with and support NOF's efforts to raise awareness of the risk factors and ways to prevent osteoporosis.

HONORING THE CREW OF THE USS "PITTSBURGH" FOR THEIR HEROISM IN WORLD WAR II

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, May 20, 2004

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to announce the introduction of a concurrent resolution recognizing and honoring the crew of the USS *Pittsburgh* for their heroism in World War II.

On March 19, 1945, the USS *Franklin*, as part of Task Force 58, launched an attack against Japan. The Japanese responded with an air attack against Task Force 58, striking the USS *Franklin*, killing 724 crew members and injuring 265 other crew members, and setting the USS *Franklin* ablaze.

The USS *Pittsburgh* was dispatched to assist the USS *Franklin*. The crew of the USS