

killed in the line of duty is entitled to benefits. Whether a 30-year-old firefighter is killed manning a hose, a 60-year-old firefighter is killed directing traffic at the scene, or a 14 year-old firefighter is killed while mobilizing supplies, providing emergency medical supplies or performing many other duties necessary for the suppression of fire, he or she should be entitled to benefits. On May 4th, 2002, like thousands of Junior Firefighters across the country do every day. Christopher Kangas fulfilled his duty and answered the call to a fire emergency. Tragically, while answering that call, he was killed in the line of duty. As a result of DOJ's ruling an entire class of firefighters who serve, protect and die while responding to an emergency are now deemed inconsequential.

Congress never intended for the PSOB Act to make judgment calls about what roles a firefighter must perform to entitle them to benefits. Furthermore, Congress made no distinction with regards to the specific tasks that an officer must be able to perform at the scene of a fire to be considered a public safety officer. In fact, most firefighter fatalities arise from causes other than burns and asphyxiation. Every year, more public safety officers are injured or killed in motor vehicle and other incidents on the highway at the scene of an emergency or while en route or leaving the scene of an emergency than by fire or smoke. The DOJ's ruling completely ignores the every day risks that our first responders face when responding to emergencies. More disturbing, is the thoughtless message the ruling sends to Junior Firefighters across the country that they are somehow less important or meaningful to the fire service than adult firefighters.

Although not surprised by the DOJ's ruling, I am appalled by the lack of understanding displayed by the Department's myopic decision. In response, I will introduce the Christopher Kangas Fallen Firefighter Apprentice Act to retroactively prevent the DOJ from denying firefighter eligibility for PSOB status based on age. When passed, Christopher Kangas and all junior firefighters will be given the status they deserve.

Fighting fires requires preparation, dedication and above all else—teamwork. Each member of the team must perform his individual duty to the fullest extent of his or her ability and accept the inherent risk of their position. Only when each member of the team performs their assigned duty, can the entire team achieve success. The firefighter providing maintenance on the equipment, operating a hose, searching a building, providing first aid to the injured or directing traffic on the scene all assume a risk to their safety and play vital role in the team's success. Firefighters across the country understand the importance of teamwork and heroically accept the risk that their duty requires. Christopher Kangas understood this principle and bravely faced the risk of his position, let's hope his memory will force the DOJ to come to that same understanding and honor those like Christopher that have paid the ultimate sacrifice protecting our communities.

#### PRESCRIPTION DRUG DISCOUNT CARDS

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, today is the first day America's seniors and disabled Americans can use the

new prescription drug discount cards created by last year's Republican Medicare law. The discount card program has not exactly been a smashing success. Nationwide, less than half a million seniors actually chose to enroll in the drug discount card program out of 40 million.

Little surprise, really, since seniors in my State of Ohio and throughout the country have found it confusing, have found it overwhelmingly bureaucratic, and have found it unreliable. With good reason. Under traditional Medicare, all benefits are accessible through just one card, but under this Rube-Goldberg, new Republican program, seniors have to choose literally from a whole deck of cards.

In my State, there are as many as 53 different cards available. One might cover blood pressure medicines but not heart medicine. Another might cover arthritis medicine but not diabetes medicine. Worse yet, the card costs \$30, and it must be kept for a whole year, but the discounts published in the brochure given out might be out of date even before an individual gets to the drugstore.

The Republican bill lets the drug companies change coverage and discounts as often as once a week without notifying the cardholder, who, as I say, has to keep the card for 12 months. That is not Medicare. Medicare, real traditional Medicare is simple, reliable and universal, not this confusing privatized Medicare that the Republicans have foisted on the American public.

The new program is having such problems that even one of its most widely accepted provisions is having trouble signing people up. The new law provides annual subsidies of up to \$600 on drug purchases for some low-income seniors. But that provision is not reaching its targeted audience. Secretary Thompson says he is somewhat concerned that low-income seniors are not signing up.

A lot of us here in the House are concerned, too; and we have offered a solution. The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. DINGELL), the gentleman from California (Mr. STARK), the gentleman from California (Mr. WAXMAN), and I have introduced a bill that will automatically enroll all eligible seniors in the new law's low-income subsidies program. Like Medicare itself, our proposal is simple, it is universal, and it is reliable.

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But instead of actually fixing the program as they could, fixing the problem, the Bush administration has decided to spend more tax dollars on advertising. The Republican Medicare bill has always been more about image than substance. This bill written by and for the drug companies, written by and for the insurance companies, this Medicare privatization bill written by and for the HMOs has made America's seniors even more confused, and it simply is not working.

When HHS auditors said the Republican bill would cost \$134 billion more than the White House said, the Bush administration suppressed the estimate and gagged the auditor. When the initial reaction from seniors was less than enthusiastic, the Bush administration announced plans to spend \$80 million of taxpayer dollars to educate America's seniors on why the bill is not really as bad as seniors think it is.

When news coverage of the program was not favorable enough, the Bush administration, undaunted, spent more money on advertising. They rolled out their own news stories complete with fake anchor, phony interview and bogus reporter. It is not about substance; it is about image.

Let us do it right. The House Republican leadership should take up the Dingell bill this week which will help low-income seniors get access to the \$600 benefit. They should take up the Dingell bill this week, we could pass it and get it over to the other body in plenty of time to have it on the President's desk by next week. Just once, instead of our government always coming down on the side of the drug industry and on the side of the insurance companies, some of the President's biggest contributors, instead of the government always coming down on the side of the drug companies and the insurance companies and the HMOs, Congress just this once could do the right thing.

#### INTELLIGENCE GATHERING IN A CONFUSING WORLD

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Mexico (Mr. PEARCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PEARCE. Mr. Speaker, Newsweek magazine this week had a cover story calling Mr. Chalabi of the Iraqi National Congress, the INC, our con man in Iraq. Newsweek claims the INC gave the U.S. poor information about Saddam Hussein's weapons programs despite millions in funds received from the U.S. Government, including the DIA and the Department of State. Stories say Chalabi is linked with Iran, and members of the INC have been engaged in fraud.

First of all, we need to understand some basic concepts that people who provide intelligence to the U.S. from tyrannies and dictatorships often risk their lives. They are what we would call tainted, probably unsavory. It is not as if a number of the members of the Governing Council in Iraq are not connected to Iran. The Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq gets \$1.2 million a month from the Iranian Revolutionary Guards whose head is Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, and he is on the Governing Council. The members of the Dawa Party and the Kurds also engage in commerce with Iran and are linked to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards.