

their orbitofrontal cortex of the brain. Is this damage to the brain permanent? Only more research will answer this question.

I do not know why the FDA and Hoffman-LaRoche seem reluctant to look for these answers. The FDA has already determined that the link between Accutane and psychiatric events is strong enough to require a bold warning on the physician label and the packaging label for this drug.

The FDA should also re-examine previous studies submitted on Accutane. A 2001 review of three studies that were not disclosed by the drug company found the drug to cause an excessive serotonergic response and concludes that it should be noted that increased serotonergic function is presumed to be the mechanism of action of a major class of antidepressants or SSRIs, or selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors. In other words, Accutane acts like antidepressants in the brain so it couldn't possibly cause psychiatric effects.

We all realize the uproar that has been caused by the FDA when they would not allow their own expert to testify that antidepressants used in young people were ineffective and increased suicidality. The British came to the same conclusion, and they banned the use of antidepressants in people under the age of 18.

Just 2 weeks ago, the FDA finally declared that there is an increased risk in suicidality in children who take SSRIs. It has created a firestorm of debate about how safe these drugs are and how they affect kids.

Yesterday's Wall Street Journal had a story about the possible reasons why there is an increase of suicidality of children who take antidepressants. The story says, "One hypothesis is that, in some patients, these drugs have a disinhibiting effect," says one Wayne Goodman, chairman of the FDA panel that examined the issue in young people. "Children are already a bit disinhibited because their brains aren't fully developed." Remember, in 2001, Accutane studies that the FDA reviewed concluded that Accutane was like the antidepressants with its SSRI function.

The FDA must demand a full accounting of how these drugs, both Accutane and antidepressants, affect our children and their developing brains.

There is no excuse for allowing Accutane to be prescribed to hundreds of thousands of kids without, at the very least, continuing to demand answers as to the effect of this drug on the brain.

At the very least, FDA can begin to address the "off label" use of this drug, but yet the FDA estimated in 2002 that 90 percent of the prescriptions were written for "off label," meaning they were not written to treat severe acne unresponsive to other antibiotics.

At the very least, FDA can finally approve a mandatory risk management

plan to track Accutane's side effects and prevent thousands of pregnancy exposures, miscarriages and abortions each year. FDA advisory committees have called for stricter distribution of the drug and a registry of the patients to control the use of this drug. They have called for this twice in the last 4 years. Unfortunately, the FDA has ignored these recommendations, and the same failed policy and system is in place with this drug.

Last week, I and a few of my colleagues shared our concerns with the Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson about the lack of action on implementing these advisory committee recommendations.

The birth defects caused by Accutane are similar to those of thalidomide. People of my generation and older remember vividly the thalidomide babies of the 1960s.

Over 1.5 million prescriptions for Accutane and its generics were written in 2003, and clearly, Accutane has the potential to do greater damage, so why do we not have the same controls as we do on thalidomide?

Madam Speaker, my time has expired, and I will insert the rest of my remarks at this point in the RECORD.

It's no secret that I am no fan of the FDA's handling of Accutane or the drug company, HLR's, constant denial that Accutane does not cause depression or affect the brain—we know with this PET Scan their denials are baseless! However, I am appalled at the FDA's inaction on this registry. That's why in June, I joined with colleagues on both sides of the aisle and introduced the Accutane Safety and Risk Management Act (H.R. 4598). The legislation would create a mandatory program to manage the drug, and includes provisions to protect the health of patients and their children. To make sure we do not allow our children and their developing brains to be destroyed.

History suggests that unless there is strong leadership from Congress on this issue, the Advisory recommendations to the FDA will end up collecting dust on a shelf.

I hope my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will join me in cosponsoring this important legislation to send a strong message to the FDA and HLR that we will not accept their inaction any longer.

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

#### SUPPRESSING THE COST ESTIMATE

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. Madam Speaker, November 17 a year or so ago, just three weeks before the Medicare bill

was signed into law, President Bush said this law would cost \$400 billion. That is what he told the American public. That is what he told the Congress. Five months earlier, his actuaries in the center for Medicare/Medicaid services, the Medicare bureau, estimated the President's Medicare bill would cost \$534 billion.

I am not saying that the President lied about this, but it is pretty clear the President's people knew this bill cost \$134 billion more than it really did. Whether the President knew about it, whether his top aides told him, remains a question.

Now, the White House says, though, the bill will cost \$576 billion. It is bad enough that the President and Republicans in Congress advertised one thing to this Congress and to the American people and sold them on another. What is worse is the deliberate nature of this deception and tactics used to achieve it.

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But let us go back and look at this whole Medicare bill and how we ended up where we did, starting from the time the drug industry and the insurance industry met in the Oval Office with President Bush and wrote the bill. Starting with then and following through all the way until Labor Day weekend, 3 weeks ago, where the President announced a 17 percent, a record increase, 17.4 percent in Medicare premiums that seniors will be forced to pay.

First the bill was written with President Bush and Vice President CHENEY sitting down with the drug industry, sitting down with the insurance industry and writing a Medicare privatization bill. You know that it was written by the drug and insurance industry because the drug industry profits go up \$180 billion under this bill, that is \$180 billion with a "b," and you know the insurance industry was part of this because they benefit to the tune of billions of dollars in direct subsidies from seniors through increased premiums and taxpayers in increased dollar subsidies to the insurance industry.

Now, we also know that the passage of this bill was perhaps the most sordid spectacle we have seen in this Chamber of the House of Representatives in decades. The debate started at midnight, the votes started at 3 o'clock in the morning after most of the press had gone home and after most Americans had turned their televisions off. Normally, a vote takes about 20 minutes, but this took 2 hours and 55 minutes. There was arm-twisting on the House floor, when this bill was actually defeated, for the first 2 hours and 45 minutes. The bill was down 216 to 218. We also know that there was a Member of Congress from Michigan, Republican, who the next day told a radio station in Michigan that Republican leaders attempted to bribe him on the House floor with campaign money. We know

all of that. And we know that as a result of this bill, we end up with a 17 percent premium increase.

So the vote was taken in the middle of the night when people were not paying attention, Members of Congress had their arms twisted and were made promises, with one Member of Congress reporting an attempted bribe, and we also know that come March, after this bill passed, that even though the drug benefit does not start until 2006, we find out that starting in March, the Federal Government and seniors whose premiums have gone up begin to pay a monthly payment to the Medicare HMOs.

In March 2004, Medicare HMOs were paid \$229 billion by taxpayers. In April of 2004, the Medicare HMOs were paid by taxpayers and Medicare beneficiaries through a premium increase of \$229 billion. In May, June, July, August, and September, every single month, taxpayers and Medicare beneficiaries have paid HMOs \$229 billion. Next month, November, December, and all of next year, the government and seniors will pay \$229 billion to the Medicare HMOs, and the drug benefit does not start until 2006.

There are 22 months of direct payments from seniors through an increased premium, and taxpayers, to the tune of billions of dollars, 22 months of \$229 billion a month payments to the insurance industry, insurance company HMOs, from seniors and taxpayers, even though the drug benefit does not start until 2006.

Mr. Speaker, you can see the perfect circle here. You can see that the bill was written by the drug and insurance industry with the President and the Vice President and Republican leaders. The drug and insurance industry get huge subsidies, much bigger profits, direct subsidies, with seniors paying a 17.4 percent premium increase, and taxpayers paying billions of dollars in order to pay off the insurance industry and the drug industry. And the completed circle ends this way: with the President and Republican leaders of this Congress getting tens of millions of dollars in campaign contributions from the drug and insurance industry.

It is corrupt, it is shameful, and it is morally reprehensible.

#### ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MILLER of Michigan). The gentleman will refrain from improper references to the President and Vice President.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. What was that, Madam Speaker?

Madam Speaker, I do not understand. I did not say the President. What did I say that was improper?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Improper references to the President and Vice President, whether by accusation or innuendo are not in order.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I only said that the President and

Vice President sat down with the drug and insurance industry and wrote this bill, and I never said the President did anything illegal. I questioned that it was the right thing to do. Am I not allowed to say that, Madam Speaker?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman may not, even by innuendo, allege a quid pro quo between receipt of campaign contributions and public-policy decisions.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I really just want to make sure I understand. So if the President wrote a bill with the drug and insurance industry, then by my saying that the drug and insurance industry gave money to the President's campaign, that is improper to say?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman's characterization of the process as corrupt conveyed the impression of undue influence.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I was talking about the leadership of this Congress being corrupt by passing a Medicare bill the way they did.

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

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

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

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

#### THE THREE Rs

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

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Madam Speaker, the three Rs used to stand for reading, writing and arithmetic. Now the three Rs stand for Republican rhetoric is not reality. Here is the proof.

Under this administration, Bermuda has become corporate America's favorite destination. And I am not talking about vacations. The Tax Code encourages and rewards U.S. companies to set up storefronts offshore to exploit their profits, with \$75 billion last year alone, and avoid U.S. taxes.

And if the administration has its way, it will get even worse. The armored trucks, loaded with U.S. corporate profits, will be lining up at the docks waiting to transfer the money out of our country. It is made to work that way. Policies by the administration and approved by the Republican House are costing the American people between \$10 billion and \$20 billion a year in exported tax revenue, money that should go for health care, education, senior citizens, and worker re-

training. The need is there but the revenue is somewhere else.

U.S. companies deserve to make a profit, but America deserves to have everyone pay their fair share to support the country that gave them the opportunity to make those profits. Indeed, the administration has put corporate interests ahead of America's interests. It is a double-edged sword and both sides are hurting the American people.

More corporate profits are being shifted offshore and more corporate expenses are being shifted on to the workers. Over the last 4 years, health care premiums paid by American workers have risen three times faster than the average earnings. Today, over 14 million Americans spend at least 25 percent of their earnings on health care costs.

And let me clarify something, Madam Speaker, before the Republican rhetoric kicks in. Those 14 million Americans, spending at least 25 percent of their earnings on health care, all of them are under the age of 65. It is the middle class, in other words, that is being struck under the burden of administration policies that put corporate interests ahead of America's interests.

Over the last 4 years, health care premiums in 26 States have risen more than 40 percent. What did the administration do in response? Reward the drug companies with more profits and renege on a promise to senior citizens. Americans today, old and young alike, are paying more and earning less. And Americans are going to be paying a lot more in the coming years.

When the administration exported the U.S. Treasury into the bank accounts of the rich, America was left holding an IOU that is a black hole on America's future. There is no way to see in it, through it, or out of it. Fully one-half of that massive deficit this year alone is a direct result of the administration's fiscal binge. They have created a mountain of debt and a mole hill of economic progress.

Despite the Republican rhetoric, the administration is short at least 100,000 jobs per month. Per month. Despite the Republican rhetoric, the American people know that. Consumer confidence was down again last month because people are not buying the administration's rhetoric. The number of consumers saying jobs are hard to come by went up. Consumers drive the U.S. economy. They are worried, and with good reason. The number of people living in poverty is up. The number of people without health care coverage is up. The number of people who have exhausted long-term employment benefits is dramatically up.

And then, Madam Speaker, there is Iraq. Escalating casualties, chaos, and crisis lead the President to conclude things are getting better. That must explain why over one-third of former soldiers called up this month and ordered to report for active duty in Iraq have not shown up.