

SUPPORT PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT CARDS

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

Mr. GINGREY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the bipartisan Medicare Modernization Act, which Congress passed in December of 2003. In particular, I would like to praise the prescription drug benefit that is already providing seniors with more affordable medication under the Medicare-approved prescription discount cards.

Mr. Speaker, the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare estimate that our seniors will save up to 60 percent off the current price of their prescription drugs under this new benefit. Sixty percent, that is a huge savings. And our seniors are already reaping the benefits of Medicare prescription drug coverage.

I would like to tell you, Mr. Speaker, and my colleagues, the story of one such senior, a constituent of mine from Talbot County named Lizzie Menefee. Ms. Menefee lives in Talbot County, Georgia. She will be 80 this May.

I met her at a town hall meeting I was holding on strengthening Social Security. Her story inspired me, and I wanted to share it with my colleagues here today and with seniors across our Nation.

Ms. Lizzie, as her friends call her, has not lived an easy life, though you would never know it from her spirited attitude. She has a heart condition, she has high blood pressure, arthritis and one functioning kidney.

As you might guess, her medical bills, in particular the cost of her monthly medications, are exorbitant. In fact, the cost of medication nearly bankrupted Ms. Menefee. It is easy to see why. She takes Zocor for her cholesterol, which is high. That medication runs \$155 a month.

Add another \$140 for the purple pill, Nexium, which she takes to control her acid reflux and heartburn, and \$20 a month for medication to lower her blood pressure.

When Ms. Lizzie gets a kidney infection, and this happens often with her condition, she pays an additional \$300 a month for antibiotics.

Before Congress passed the Medicare Modernization Act in 2003, Ms. Menefee regularly spent more than \$500 a month, Mr. Speaker, just on prescription drugs. As a senior with limited income and a widow, these costs were simply prohibitive. But there is good news for her and for all seniors out there. It comes in the form of the Medicare prescription drug benefit, part D, if you will.

Last year, Ms. Lizzie signed up for the new temporary provision under Medicare, the discount card. She is incredibly happy with her coverage, and I can see why. Today this lady spends a mere \$7 a month on prescription medication. Yes, you heard me correctly: \$7 a month.

Mr. Speaker, there are hundreds of Ms. Lizzies out there who have benefited from substantial savings on their prescription drugs, and there are millions more not yet enrolled in the program who would benefit from these savings as well.

When our seniors have to choose between buying food or buying medicine, their health suffers. Seniors on fixed incomes cannot afford \$500 a month in medicine; heck, most of us cannot afford \$500 a month. Congress undoubtedly, undoubtedly, Mr. Speaker, did the right thing when we added prescription drug coverage under Medicare. And there is more we can do.

In January 2006, the permanent Medicare drug benefit goes into effect. If our seniors do not know how to sign up, or if they do not understand the benefits that it offers, the good legislation we have passed will go to waste.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me and educating our seniors about the extensive savings available to them through the Medicare drug benefit and to help seniors sign up for the plan that is right for them. Do not let the other side poison the well and scare our seniors and discourage them from signing up for this great plan.

Nothing would make me happier than to have millions of Lizzie Menefeess across our great Nation staying healthy because we helped lower the prices of the drugs that they need.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Congress on the successful legislation, and I encourage my colleagues to educate their constituents on this valuable benefit.

COMMEMORATING HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

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

Mr. DAVIS of Alabama. Mr. Speaker, let me join other colleagues of mine in standing today in commemoration of Holocaust Remembrance Day. We celebrate this year, 2005, the 60-year anniversary of the end of World War II.

We also look back at the enormous human loss that occurred in concentration camps all over Eastern Europe, all over that continent during World War II, and I think it is enormously important that if we can somehow distill just three lessons from this time frame, that it be the following things: first of all, we instill in our society and contemplate the question of hatred, of intolerance, of racial and religious bigotry, and we still try to put it in perspective, how some human beings can have animus toward other human beings.

The reality is that in 1930 in the depths of Nazi Germany, there were many people who did not take seriously the rhetoric of the Third Reich. There were many who did not take seriously the venom that came from Adolph Hitler. They had this mindset that it was simply a misbegotten ideology.

They had the mindset that it was simply words that were meant to wound or meant to win an election. They did not realize that there was a comprehensive plan to destroy another set of human beings that was at stake.

Similarly today, when we hear lingering anti-Semitism in our society, when we hear lingering bigotry and racism in our society, we have a tendency at first to think that it is mere words. We have a tendency to try to strip those words from any context or any meaning.

The reality is that what the Holocaust teaches us is that words do matter, because they can signal the human soul and just how depraved it can be. That is an important lesson that we take from that time frame.

There is another important lesson that we take. Every now and then, there is this tendency to engage in a hierarchy of suffering, to ask which was worse, slavery or the Holocaust; which is worse, racial bigotry or anti-Semitism or religious bigotry.

The reality is that there is no hierarchy of hatred. All hatred has a tendency to wound and corrupt and to spoil the human soul. All hatred has a tendency to degrade both the person who hates and the target. And what we have seen in our last half century of human conduct, indeed our last century of human conduct, is that neither the left nor the right has given ground to each other on this front.

Both the left and the right have shown enormous capacity to pick up weapons against each other and to degrade each other. And it is a lesson in these contemptuous times in American politics.

□ 1515

It is a lesson that if we want to build a sense of humanity in this country, that we have to find a way to see past the bitterest and darkest divisions of the left and right.

There is a third lesson, Mr. Speaker. As we look at our place in the world today, this is only several weeks after the world lay to rest Karol Wojtyla, John Paul II, the leader of the Catholic Church, the leader of 1 billion Catholics around the globe. He had a particular insight about humanity.

He understood that poverty and totalitarianism are both threats to the human condition. They are both threats to the human soul. Frankly, neither the left nor the right in our country have done a good job of appreciating the linkage. Neither the left nor the right in our country has done a good job of appreciating that these two sources of darkness, totalitarianism and intense poverty, are just as destructive of what human beings can be. Well, John Paul II understood that.

As we look at the last 50 or 60 years of suffering in this world, I hope we can, as a Congress, challenge the world to a higher standard. One that from a standpoint from the left and the right manages to condemn political and economic threats to the human spirit.