

premiums even though they receive no coverage. September 22 was also the day that senior citizens and persons with disabilities came together in events across the country to demand an affordable drug benefit in Medicare.

Nearly 7 million senior citizens and people with disabilities are expected to enter the donut hole. A Kaiser Family Foundation study estimates that, of the people who will fall into the donut hole, 1.9 million (28 percent) have incomes less than 150 percent of poverty; 2.9 million (42 percent) are in fair or poor health; and 3.8 million (55 percent) are women.

The donut hole is an unprecedented phenomenon. This type of coverage gap is not found in the Federal Employees Health Benefits plan or in any other private plan. It is an insurance mechanism especially crafted for people with Medicare.

An analysis from an August report from the Center for Economic and Policy Research concludes that if Medicare had been allowed to negotiate drug prices in the same way as the Veterans Administration, the savings would have been more than enough to eliminate the donut hole gap in coverage. In fact, the close to \$50 billion that could be saved in the first full year of the program is more than twice the size of the donut hole.

The real winners in the Part D program are the drug and insurance companies. In a report released this week by the Committee on Government Reform Democratic staff shows that profits grew by over \$8 billion (27 percent) for the ten largest pharmaceutical manufacturers in the first half of this year.

The losers in the Part D program are people with Medicare. The prices charged by the top Part D plans in my Congressional District were 79 percent higher than the prices negotiated by the Federal government. A recent Merrill Lynch analysis found that in 2006 prices for popular brand-name drugs had increased by 8.6 percent over the last year, twice as fast as the overall information rate.

The donut hole puts seniors and people disabilities' health at grave risk. A New England Journal of Medicine study found that seniors' behaviors change when faced with a prescription drug benefit cap after which they have to pay the full costs of their drugs—and the donut hole is a cap. The study found that found that seniors who confront a cap are more likely to skip doses of treatments, less likely to visit hospital emergency departments, and, sadly, sometimes more likely to die sooner. Their annual mortality rate was 22 percent higher than those without such a cap on benefits.

Representatives MARION BERRY of Arkansas, TOM ALLEN of Maine and I introduced H.R. 752, the Prescription Drug Savings and Choice Act, which would take Medicare in a new direction by siding with senior citizens and people with disabilities—not the drug companies. This bill would give people with Medicare the choice of enrolling in a Medicare-administered drug benefit and we would force drug companies to lower their prices by requiring Medicare to negotiate for deep discounts. The savings could be used to fill the donut hole.

Ms. Pauline Metzger-Aronson wrote to me earlier this year to tell me that she fell into the

donut hole in June. She will pay a monthly premium for the rest of the year, although she will not receive any benefits because she will not climb out of the donut hole. She told me that the saying, "As you amble through life, whatever be your goal: Keep your eye on the donut and not upon the hole" had new meaning because "some of us seniors have reached the point where the donut is gone and we are now forced to look into the hole." H.R. 752 would help Ms. Metzger-Aronson and many others. It is a step in the right direction which will put America's seniors and people with disabilities first. I urge my colleagues to support this important legislation.

#### HONORING GEORGIA HOUSING WEEK

#### HON. JACK KINGSTON

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, September 25, 2006*

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, today marks the end of Public Housing Week in the State of Georgia. I would like to commend those who work hard every day to ensure that our fellow Georgians have safe and affordable housing. The following proclamation was issued at the Capitol building in Atlanta, Georgia last week, and I would like to submit it for the RECORD.

#### PROCLAMATION

The Federal Public Housing Program was initiated under the U.S. Housing Act of 1937 as part of the Nation's New Deal Initiative, and has provided housing for millions of Americans since the outset of this program.

Georgia, being the first State in the Nation to construct Public Housing for its citizens under the Federal Public Housing Program, continues to be a leader of this industry and recognized across the country for its excellence in providing decent, safe, and affordable housing for Georgia's citizens.

The Georgia Association of Housing and Redevelopment Authorities and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development work in partnership to provide public housing for over 110,000 families in the State of Georgia, as well as local jobs, economic opportunity, family services, and neighborhood revitalization for the majority of Georgia cities through their local housing authorities.

Governor Sonny Perdue of the State of Georgia proclaims September 19th through the 26th as Public Housing Week in Georgia. I encourage all citizens to express their appreciation for the commitment and the service of those in the Public Housing Industry within the State of Georgia.

#### CONGRATULATING ARAGON HIGH SCHOOL ON THE COMPLETION OF ITS MODERNIZATION PROGRAM

#### HON. TOM LANTOS

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Monday, September 25, 2006*

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the passage of an important

bond issue, Measure D, and the improvements it has made in the San Mateo Union High School District. Voters in my district saw a great opportunity to advance our community and overwhelmingly approved a \$137.5 million bond measure. Combining this bond measure with other resources the district undertook a \$234.5 million capital improvement program. Some of these funds were dedicated for new construction and modernization of Aragon High School. The community will be celebrating the completion of this project with a ribbon cutting ceremony on October 28, 2006.

Aragon High School has been a California Distinguished School since 1988 and has many accomplishments. It is one of only three high schools in the County to have earned and improved an 800 Academic Performance Index Score (API) on the Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) tests. Soon after the passage of the bond issue, Aragon High School was the first in the district to provide Advanced Placement (AP) courses that have challenged students dedicated to academics and has encouraged the professional development of California AP teachers.

Aragon High School's developments have encouraged others outside the County as well. The school's demonstration of a commitment to reform necessary for academic success has led to Aragon's participation in the New American High School initiative for school reform, receiving a \$40,000 grant tied to middle and elementary feeder schools. The capital improvement program and the school's dedication to academic success have helped to ensure students' acceptance into the most prestigious colleges and universities in America with 57% of the Class of 2006 accepted to four year colleges. These graduates earn nearly \$2 million annually through scholarships and grants.

Beyond academics, Aragon High School can boast of extra-curricular programs that have been improved with the passage of Measure D. Students of Aragon High School participate in award winning vocal and instrumental music programs, including performances of the band at Carnegie Hall in New York, an invitation with the Boston Pops Symphony, and the honor to represent California and the United States at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing.

The Measure D modernization and new construction program at Aragon High School is made possible by the Board of Trustees, joined by community leaders, elected officials, parents, school staff, and the public at large that volunteered and helped pass this bond issue and do what is best for the youth attending schools in the community.

The San Mateo Union School District has been and is devoted to its academics and voters within the County. The people of the community have contributed to these successes by voting on Measure D and by dedicating themselves in the classrooms. I commend them for their efforts that have provided a safe and modern teaching and learning facility in San Mateo County.