

and values on which our Nation stands. I thank the gentleman.

Now I want to talk about the Medicare vote that took place today. There is a saying when I was growing up, Mr. Speaker, if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

This is a program our seniors will tell us over 75 percent are fine with this. If any of my colleagues were to say I get 75 percent of the vote when I go to the polls, that would be a landslide of monumental, monumental proportions.

But they want to take this program and change it for the sake of changing it. They have been asked by the American Legion not to do this, by the ALS Association not to do this. Epilepsy, don't change this, it is working. It is working.

The thing that I thought was so unfortunate was with our veterans and changing the pricing and price controls going into place, we have to realize the VA system is very different from the Medicare system. The VA system, it is comparing apples and oranges. The VA system is a direct provision of those health care services. Medicare Part D is an insurance plan, and we know that the prices come down on that. Some States have plans that are under \$20 a month. The plan is about \$200 billion less than was estimated when it first went into place.

So it is so interesting that the Democrats decided they wanted to change this plan. Let me just read some of the quotes from some of the groups that oppose the price controls that were put in place today. Groups that oppose, and I have heard estimates as high as \$750 million extra that it is going to cost VA on this plan. Let me read the comments from some of these groups.

The American Legion, a group everybody knows, it is a veterans service organization, has nearly 3 million members and yesterday they sent out a letter opposing H.R. 4 asking for a "no" vote saying, "It is not in the best interest of America's veterans and their families."

Again quoting, "Every time the Federal Government has enacted pharmaceutical price control legislation, the Department of Veterans Affairs experiences significant increases in its pharmaceutical cost as an unintended consequence."

Mr. Speaker, those are not my words, those are the words of the American Legion on behalf of the 3 million veterans they represent asking that this not be done.

So in addition to passing \$5 to \$7 billion of unfunded mandates on to the Nation's small businesses, in addition to passing hundreds of billions of dollars worth of extra cost to our shippers because of the homeland security provisions, you also are going to put nearly three-quarters of a billion of extra cost onto the Veterans Administration health services.

I tell you what, as I said, Mr. Speaker, this is hang-onto-your-wallet Congress because in the first 54 hours and

48 minutes that is where we have gotten. It is a lot of money, and the tote board just seems to be adding right on up.

The ALS Association, Lou Gehrig's disease, voiced strong opposition to H.R. 4 saying, "Legislation that authorizes the Federal Government to negotiate Medicare prescription drug prices will significantly limit the ability of people with ALS to access the drugs they need, and will seriously jeopardize the future development of treatments for the disease." Those are not my words, that is the ALS Association in their opposition to the legislation that this body passed.

Epilepsy Foundation, and I am quoting from their letter, "Access to the right medications for epilepsy can make the difference between living in the community, being employed, and leading a healthy and productive life. The consequences of denying the appropriate medication for an individual with epilepsy can be life threatening and can include injury, emergency room visits, hospitalization or other types of costly medical interventions."

Mr. Speaker, that is the Epilepsy Foundation asking that the bill the majority passed today, H.R. 4, not pass because of the implications for those who suffer with epilepsy in securing the medications that they need.

Now here is the National Alliance for Mental Illness. They have had reservations and concerns about this legislation. I am quoting from their letter, "NAMI is extremely concerned that placing this new legal mandate on the secretary would directly result in loss of the all or substantially-all guidance in the six protected classes and therefore poses a significant risk to Medicare beneficiaries with mental illness."

Mr. Speaker, these again are not my words. They are concerns that have been expressed. They have been expressed by individuals that were concerned about what they saw happening in the first 100 hours in this administration.

What people thought they were going to see was transparency. They thought they were going to see openness. They thought they were going to see a willingness to step towards bipartisanship.

Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that what we have seen is missed opportunities. We have seen a closed process. The Rules Committee has not functioned. Legislation has gone straight to the floor. No debate in committee. No open process, and that has been unfortunate for the people of this Nation.

As I close, I will once again say that one of the things that does concern us is the impact on the American taxpayer and figuring out who is going to pay for this. Mr. Speaker, it does appear, it absolutely does appear that it is going to be the American taxpayer that is going to see government grow, government expand and government is going to continue to expand in the 110th Congress.

THE AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am always delighted to have the opportunity to follow my distinguished colleague from Tennessee. She has a breadth of assessment that provides insight, but I respectfully disagree with much of the commentary that has been spoken to in the last hour.

That challenge that the American people gave to us on November 7, 2006, was to go in a new direction. It was to fix the broken and improve the conditions of livelihood and life for the American public.

So I thank Speaker PELOSI and Majority Leader HOYER, Majority Whip CLYBURN and Chairman EMANUEL and Vice Chairman Larson for recognizing that for almost 4 years large populations of individuals, your parents, your grandparents, have languished in the confusion of Medicare Part D, when they have fallen, sunken into a hole, and the enormous cost has overtaken them.

The veterans know that we have stood fast on their behalf. Therefore, any disparity, disparate treatment to our veterans will be immediately fixed.

I know that it was the Democrats who fought consistently to ensure that veterans hospitals were not closed by promoting, if you will, the veterans health care bill that was passed in order to give the veterans' hospitals more money.

So I am grateful of this democracy. And I came to the floor to cite the leadership of a giant of an American whom we will honor on Monday. This Congress in a Special Order that I will lead will honor him again on Tuesday evening, January 16, for Members to join us in commemorating and celebrating the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King.

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I raise his name in the context of my good friend from Tennessee, because his whole legacy, although not admired during the time he was working, was to try and help America, to promote America's conscience.

I am reminded of his letter from a Birmingham jail, and I encourage my colleagues to join us in the third hour on Tuesday, the 16th, when he was in essence thrown into jail for his work of advocacy in Birmingham. Bull Connor ruled, dogs and hoses were used to attack human beings, and the clergy of America wrote and asked why this pastor had gone to Birmingham to be disruptive.

This is both eloquent, but biblically grounded, but really secularly teaching words that he said. He said, "I am taking the time to write this letter to you because I knew it was important. Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I

cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. Never again can we afford, never again can we afford, to live with the narrow, provisional, outside agitator idea. Anyone who lives inside the United States can never be considered an outsider anywhere within its bounds." And lastly he said, "Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid."

Dr. King was arrested repeatedly. But he left America the direction and the instruction of rendering aid, and as Members of the United States Congress, it is our challenge to render aid to America and to all of her citizens, to ensure that we provide them with the life and the dignity and the justice and the freedom promised by our Constitution.

I look forward to joining with my fellow Members as I lead a special order on Tuesday, January 16th, to truly account for his life. But I also am grateful this week for the minimum wage and prescription drug benefit reform and 9/11 reforms and a number of other issues we are looking forward to, will in fact honor the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King.

30-SOMETHING WORKING GROUP

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. ALTMIRE). The gentleman from Florida (Mr. MEEK) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, it is an honor to address the House, and I will concur with my colleague, Ms. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE, in honoring the legacy and memory of Dr. Martin Luther King and his contributions, and I must add Ms. Coretta Scott King and the entire King family and the King Institute in Atlanta, Georgia. This country will be forever grateful for the contributions of the King family and those who carry their memory.

Many of us know that Ms. JACKSON-LEE is going to have a special order on Tuesday. Many of us know that service is the way the King family wanted us to address this upcoming Monday, being able to carry out not only public service, which is random acts of goodwill throughout the country and your community where you live, but especially the day that we recognize his birthday. For his birthday to have birth here on this House floor and in this Congress is recognized as a Federal holiday, is something that this Congress should always hold on to.

I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE).

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Let me compliment the gentleman for beginning his special order with the reference to Dr. King. Might I just add how excited I am that Members are going home to their districts to be able to commemorate this holiday.

Might I just cite, for the first time in Houston, Council Member Ada Edwards and many other elected officials and myself will be walking silently. We love parades, and we will be commemorating that, but we will be walking silently. I want to pay tribute to that.

The AFL-CIO will be in Houston, its national officers and representatives, the Reverend Al Sharpton, commemorating.

Finally, we will have what we call the Frontiersmen breakfast, an annual event, for corporate Houston. I only cite that not to highlight Houston, but to say all over America, different representations, different communities, will be celebrating and commemorating his holiday, which shows the broadness of his legacy.

I thank you for allowing me to speak and I thank the King family as well.

Mr. MEEK of Florida. Thank you so much, Ms. JACKSON-LEE. I know that many Members of Congress hopefully on both sides of the aisle will be joining you during your special order in recognition of the contributions of Dr. King and the entire King family, including Ms. Coretta Scott King.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take an opportunity to come down, and I have already given comments on the memory and legacy of Dr. King and the entire family for the record, and I know that that will be entered. I wanted to come to the floor just to sum up this week.

As you know, those of us in the 30-Something Working Group, we work to not only let the Members know what the Congress is doing and what we are leading in the direction of that the American people would like for us to go in in all areas, need it be defense, need it be standing up on behalf of our most vulnerable members of our society, our children and our elderly, those that have put forth opportunities so that we would have a better America. When we think about and reflect just on the last few hours here in the House and we reflect on what happened last week and the beginning of this week, I can't help but what we say in the Baptist Church, since I am Baptist, testify for a moment.

I have been in Congress now two terms. I believe we have done more in the last week and one or two days than we have done in a very long time as it relates to the 109th and 110th Congress.

I come today to report, because I know that some would say that while everything is happening and everything is going in reverse and people are not being included and goodness gracious, why didn't we have 10,000 hours of committee work, well, I would just say for everything that has passed, it seems like the American people are happier and pleased with the way this Congress is moving with its work.

I just want to make sure, because you can't say it enough, because it is important that the record is correct. When Members come to the floor, it is important that Members reflect on what they say before they come to the floor.

This is America. You are elected from your district. You can come and voice your opinion, not only of your constituents, but of all Americans, but I think it is important when we look at the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD that we are as accurate as possible.

Historians will look back at this time and say, let me see what took place during that time in this country's history. I think it is important that the American people know that even though we represent individual districts, like I represent Miami Dade County and Broward County in Florida, I have to make sure that I carry not only the will of the people from that district, but also the American people. That is the reason why we have to make sure that the Members are informed of what actually took place, in case some forgot, and that the American people know what is going on. I say all of that to lay the facts out, and the facts are the facts.

The fact is that in the last Congress, the 109th Congress and the Congress before that one, the American people were very disappointed in what was not taking place, Mr. Speaker. It so great we have a 30-Something Working Group in this U.S. House of Representatives. I think I said the last time we were on the House floor, I believe just the night before last, we said we didn't create this 30-Something Working Group just to get in the majority. We didn't create the 30-Something Working Group, thanks to the Speaker, who then was minority leader at that time. We wanted to make sure the American people and the Members of this Congress knew that we wanted to work in a bipartisan way towards tackling the issues that the American people wanted us to tackle and represent them and not the special interests.

Now, there are some folk that are still on the other side of the aisle that are disappointed that the American people are getting what they have been asking for, need it be polling or what have you. I can tell you, some of my friends on the other side, a lot of my friends on the other side agree with us, and when I say "us," I am saying the Members on the Democratic side, on issues that are bipartisan.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important for us to reflect on the fact that there are some Members on the majority side that have been asking for that all along. A majority of the Members on the minority side have been asking for bipartisanship. Now we have it.

Now you have the minority party, or the minority leadership, I must add, on the Republican side, they are so concerned that so many of their Members are working in a bipartisan way. It is not because they like the Democratic Members on the majority side. It is because they are voting on behalf of their constituents.

Well, what is wrong with that? I came down to the floor because, you know, I was with my daughter and we are in the office, it is the end of the