

These are policies focused on addressing the real problems our people face, and delivering results.

I've had people tell me they fear that America may no longer be the land of opportunity it has always been, and that Virginia's history in playing a leading role in the life of our nation may be just that—history. I say: They are wrong.

Working together—Republicans, Democrats and Independents alike—Virginia will continue to blaze the trail of opportunity and prosperity.

And like the mechanic looking to the owner's manual to troubleshoot the automobile, we should look to the Founders and their writings for wisdom.

The Founders' capstone on the Constitution is the Bill of Rights. No federal mandate nor program crafted by either political party should undermine the central principle of federalism, enshrined in the birth certificate of America by those who pledged their lives, fortunes and sacred honor.

The Founders recognized that the government closest to the people governs best. More often than not, Richmond knows better about the hopes and dreams of the people than Washington. And Galax and Fairfax and Virginia Beach know far better than Richmond.

As we enthusiastically pursue the vision of "A Commonwealth of Opportunity", I ask all Virginians to continue to seek your own opportunities to get involved in the life of our Commonwealth.

Half a century ago President Kennedy challenged the American people to "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." Today, I ask all Virginians to rise up to meet this timeless challenge.

We live in the most generous nation on Earth. So many Virginians give sacrificially of their time, talents and treasure, and rightly so. The Scriptures say, "To whom much is given, much will be required."

Right now, much is required in the nation of Haiti. And I urge all Virginians to donate to the relief efforts underway.

Here in our Commonwealth, I urge business owners to look for opportunities to sponsor a little league team, help a charity, and promote corporate responsibility in the communities in which you live and work.

I urge all the leaders of our faith communities to expand your selfless work of helping the homeless, feeding the poor, and comforting the broken hearted.

I urge the young people of Virginia to use your talents and energy to fully engage in the future of this Commonwealth.

I urge Virginians who came here from other lands to contribute your culture, your history and your traditions to our rich tapestry of life.

I urge every Virginian to take every opportunity to thank a man or woman in a law enforcement or military uniform for the preservation of our freedoms.

There is so much each one of us can do to leave this Commonwealth a better place than we found it.

No government program can substitute for the incredible good done through voluntary actions performed freely by caring individuals every day.

And while government can help provide opportunities, it is every person's responsibility to take advantage of them.

In recent weeks I've seen people exercising that responsibility, and changing lives at: the Healing Place in Richmond, the Carpenter's Shelter in Alexandria, Food Banks in Abingdon, Norfolk and Richmond, the Boys and Girls Club in Virginia Beach, the USO in Norfolk.

As a Commonwealth, we must do the same . . . and we will.

Standing here today, on the steps of our State Capitol, in the inspiring shadows of the shared history behind us, we embrace the limitless future opportunities stretching out far before us. . . .

And now it is here, in this place, that we pledge to work together to create "A Commonwealth of Opportunity" . . . for all Virginians, and to add our steps to Virginia's journey.

It was George Washington who noted, in his first Inaugural Address, "The propitious smiles of Heaven can never be expected to remain on a nation that disregards the eternal rules of order and right which Heaven itself has ordained."

It is right to help one another.

It is right to work together to get results and solve problems.

It is right to provide opportunities for all.

Let us heed the words of the Father of our Country, employ these eternal rules of order and right, and get to work for the good of the people of Virginia.

Thank you and God Bless the Commonwealth of Virginia.

HONORING SEVEN AMERICANS  
KILLED IN AFGHANISTAN ON DE-  
CEMBER 30, 2009

SPEECH OF

HON. JAMES R. LANGEVIN

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 20, 2010

Mr. LANGEVIN. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the bravery and sacrifice of the seven CIA officers and contractors who gave their lives in the line of duty during the December 30 bombing of a CIA base in Khost, Afghanistan. I also want to recognize those Americans who were injured in the blast and offer my wishes for a full and quick recovery.

As we have all learned by now, a suicide bomber who was believed to possess information critical to counterterrorism operations entered the U.S. forward operating base in Khost, where he activated explosives that took the lives of seven Americans, including one of our nation's top counterterrorism experts. Six other Americans standing nearby were injured in the explosion.

The men and women of our intelligence community work behind a veil of secrecy, yet as this tragic incident reminds us, they are still exposed to the dangers that come from the difficult and often thankless job of protecting our country. Unlike our soldiers in uniform, these public servants must keep their many victories secret, while their rare failures and raw grief make headlines. My thoughts and prayers are with the families of these brave men and women. They, and all the other patriots who serve so honorably in our intelligence community, have my unending gratitude and my unwavering support. I will continue to do everything in my power to ensure that they have the tools, resources and encouragement they need to keep America safe.

THE FEHBP PRESCRIPTION DRUG  
INTEGRITY, TRANSPARENCY,  
AND COST SAVINGS ACT

HON. STEPHEN F. LYNCH

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, January 21, 2010

Mr. LYNCH. Madam Speaker, I don't have to remind you that much of the public policy debate in this country has largely focused on healthcare reform and on how best to tackle rising costs, while ensuring access and quality at the same time. These calls for change in the healthcare policy arena have also been coupled with demands for a more fiscally responsible federal government.

Many policymakers look to the FEHBP as a model for providing health care. That's why it's important to ensure the program is providing the best benefits and at the best price for subscribers. Having conducted a Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service and the District of Columbia hearing in June, a September policy forum with key stakeholders, and months of additional research and collaboration, I have discovered that when it comes to prescription drugs, our federal employees and retirees are not receiving the best benefit at the best price. Considering that prescription drug costs comprise nearly 30% of the FEHBP's premiums, it is imperative that we do everything in our power to ensure that federal employees and the taxpayer are getting the best value for their dollar.

In short, the FEHBP health plans contract with Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) to price and to provide the pharmacy benefit to FEHBP members. In contrast with other federal health programs, the FEHBP does not regulate or negotiate drug pricing for its members. Instead it relies on competition among the various carriers and PBMs to keep prices low. However, as we recently affirmed, prices are not low! In fact, when comparing FEHBP drug prices to those of other federal programs, such as the Veterans Administration, the Department of Defense, Medicare, Medicaid and the Public Health Service's 340B Program, the FEHBP is paying substantially more for its drugs. Even more alarming is that some research actually shows that Costco and drug-store.com offer their employees better prices for drugs than the FEHBP does for federal workers and retirees. In these economically challenging times, it is unacceptable to ask federal employees and the American taxpayer to put up with such an irregularity. If the FEHBP wants to remain a model for providing health benefits, legislative changes that allow for alternative prescription drug benefit contracting and pricing are in order.

For this reason, I am proud to be introducing legislation today that will afford the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) greater oversight authority in the contracting and pricing of the FEHBP prescription drug benefit. Titled "The FEHBP Prescription Drug Integrity, Transparency, and Cost Savings Act", this bill will prohibit certain ownership relationships; require Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs) to return 99% of all monies received from manufacturers for FEHBP business; cap prices paid by the health plan to the Average Manufacturer Price (AMP); restrict drug switching by PBMs; and require enhanced transparency and disclosure of all contract terms and related information. These requirements intend to not only