

Mr. GRASSLEY. I ask unanimous consent the Senator from Oregon have 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection the Senator from Oregon has 5 minutes.

SENIOR PRESCRIPTION INSURANCE COVERAGE EQUITY ACT

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I have been coming to the floor for a number of days now in an effort to try to get a focus back on this prescription drug issue which seems to involve a lot of finger pointing and a lot of partisan bickering. As part of that effort, I have been urging seniors to send in copies of their prescription drug bills. Just as this poster says, the senior can send in a copy of the prescription drug bill, and write to each of us in the Senate here in Washington, DC.

I have been actually coming to the floor and reading some of these bills for a number of weeks. Just in the last couple of days, I heard from a woman in Portland—she is 84; she has diabetes and a heart condition. She has only Social Security to support herself. She is spending over a third of that Social Security check every month on prescription drugs. She is now at a point where it is hard to pay the taxes on her home.

I heard from another gentleman recently. He has a monthly Social Security check of \$633. The cost of his drugs is \$644 a month. He is spending more for his prescription drugs each month than he is actually getting in income. So every month this senior is having to choose between food and fuel and fuel and health care. So as a result of this effort to get from seniors copies of their prescription drug bills, we are hearing about the kind of suffering that seniors are enduring around this country.

Senator OLYMPIA SNOWE and I have a bipartisan prescription drug bill. It would cover all senior citizens on an ability-to-pay basis. More than 50 Senators of both political parties are now on record as supporting a funding plan for this legislation. I know other Senators have approaches they would like to try. What is important is that we get a bipartisan focus on this issue. Every public opinion poll shows seniors and families across this country are having difficulty making ends meet when it comes to the high cost of essential health care services.

Our approach is marketplace oriented. There are not price controls. It is not one size fits all. The Snowe-Wyden legislation is called SPICE, the Senior Prescription Insurance Coverage Equity Act. It is designed to deal with the double whammy our seniors are facing on their prescriptions. First, Medicare does not cover the drugs they need and, second, when a senior citizen walks into a drug store, in effect that senior is subsidizing the big buyers, the

health maintenance organizations, and other health plans that are able to get discounts.

So seniors have this double whammy now in front of them when it comes to their prescriptions. I hope more will, as these posters indicate, send us copies of their prescription drug bills. I think on the basis of these bills that we are getting from seniors across the country—each of us in the Senate here in Washington, DC—we can bring about bipartisan support to actually respond to the needs of the seniors.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, may we have order in the Senate? The Senator is addressing the Senate. May we have order.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will be in order. The Senator from Oregon has the floor.

Mr. BYRD. Mr. President, we still do not have order. May we have order in the Senate? You may have to rap that gavel to be heard.

Mr. WYDEN. Thank you, Mr. President. The Senator from West Virginia has been a great ally of the Nation's older people, and I very much appreciate his thoughtfulness. I believe my time is almost up.

I intend to keep coming to the floor of the Senate to read from these bills that we are getting from the Nation's senior citizens. We have 54 Members of the Senate already on record as having voted for a specific plan to fund a prescription drug benefit for older people. We can do this in a bipartisan way. We have the chairman of the Aging Committee, Senator GRASSLEY, who has led our efforts on the committee on so many issues.

I am going to keep coming back to the floor and read from these bills. Again and again, we are hearing from seniors who cannot afford important drugs such as their diabetes medicines.

I will wrap up by saying, when I am asked the question whether our Nation can afford prescription drug coverage, my response is we cannot afford not to cover prescriptions.

A lot of these drugs help seniors stay healthy, keep their blood pressure down, or help to reduce cholesterol. I have cited previously an anticoagulant drug. It costs senior citizens about \$1,000 a year. With those kinds of medicines, we can help prevent strokes that involve expenses of more than \$100,000.

I am going to keep coming back to this floor to focus on the needs of seniors. We ought to do this in a bipartisan way. That is what is behind the Snowe-Wyden legislation. A lot of our colleagues have other ideas for addressing this issue.

As this poster says, I hope seniors will continue to send copies of their prescription drug bills to us in the Senate, Washington, DC.

I will keep coming to this floor until we can get the bipartisan action we need that provides real relief for the Nation's older people.

I yield the floor.

Mr. REID. I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BANKRUPTCY REFORM ACT OF 1999—Continued

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senator from Wisconsin, Mr. FEINGOLD, now be recognized to offer his amendment No. 2748, and he be recognized for up to 12 minutes for general debate on the amendment. I further ask consent that the amendment be laid aside, with a vote occurring on or in relation to the amendment at 5 o'clock, with no second-degree amendment in order prior to the vote. I further ask consent that votes occur on or in relation to the following two amendments in sequence at 5 o'clock, with no second-degree amendments in order prior to the votes, and there be 4 minutes for explanation prior to each vote. Those amendments are No. 2521 offered by Senator DURBIN and No. 2754 offered by Senator DODD. I further ask consent that following the sequencing of the amendments, Senator SCHUMER then be recognized to call up an amendment and to speak for up to 2 minutes and the amendment then be laid aside.

I further ask unanimous consent that the time between now and 5 o'clock be equally divided in the usual form. I further ask consent when the Senate resumes consideration of S. 625 tomorrow, I be recognized to call up our amendment No. 2771 on which there will be a 4-hour time limit.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there objection?

Mr. REID. Reserving the right to object, Mr. President, if I could ask my friend, the manager of this bill, it is my understanding that the time between now and 5 o'clock would be evenly divided between the majority and minority?

Mr. GRASSLEY. Yes.

Mr. REID. During that period of time, Senators DODD and DURBIN would be able to speak on those two amendments?

Mr. GRASSLEY. That is right.

Mr. REID. Also, during that same period of time, it is my understanding—for example, Senator SCHUMER wanted to offer amendments during that period of time. He would be allowed to do that?

Mr. GRASSLEY. We have it stated here.

Mr. REID. After the votes.

Mr. GRASSLEY. After the votes.