

drugs pay far more than consumers in Canada for the exact same medications.

The study compared the 1997 prices of the five brand name drugs with the highest '97 sales to the elderly—Zocor (a cholesterol reducing medication), Prilosec (an ulcer and heartburn medication), Procardia XL (a heart medication), Zolof (a medication used to treat depression), and Norvasc (a blood pressure medication). On average, seniors in the 13th District are paying prices that are 100% higher than the prices Canadian consumers pay. For example, for a one-month supply of Prilosec, the average uninsured senior living in our District pays over \$70 more than a consumer in Canada.

This price discrimination against seniors is happening across the country. Yet, America's seniors are the least likely to be able to afford these higher costs. Nearly half of Medicare beneficiaries live on yearly incomes of less than \$15,000 a year and a third live on less than \$10,000. While some Medicare beneficiaries have prescription drug coverage through employer retirement packages, Medicare HMOs (which are lowering their prescription drug coverage each year), and Medigap policies, about 35% of Medicare beneficiaries have no coverage at all and must pay inflated prices for their needed medications. It is also estimated that nearly two-thirds of Medicare beneficiaries are at risk for being without prescription drug

Yet, at the same time that seniors are being asked to pay these outrageous prices, the drug companies are reaping the benefit of generous governmental subsidies. There's something wrong with a system that gives drug companies huge tax breaks while allowing them to price-gouge seniors. My bill attempts to correct this glaring inequity in a very even-handed approach. So long as your company gives U.S. consumers a fair deal on drug prices as measured against their same products sold in other OECD countries, you will continue to qualify for all available research tax credits. But if your company is found to be fleecing American taxpayers with prices higher than those charged for the same product sold in Japan, Germany, Switzerland, or Canada, then you become ineligible for those tax credits.

I know that the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America will strongly oppose the Prescription Price Equity Act. PhRMA will say that this bill spells the end of pharmaceutical R&D. That is complete nonsense. As shown by CRS, drug industry profits are already threefold higher than all other major industries. This legislation doesn't change the current system of research tax credits at all unless companies refuse to fairly price their U.S. products. The intent of my bill is by no means to reduce the U.S. Government's role in promoting research and development. It is simply to say that in return for such significant government contributions to their industry, drug companies must treat American consumers fairly. Why should U.S. tax dollars be used to allow drug prices to be reduced in other highly developed countries, but not here at home as well?

Again, this bill simply tells PhRMA that U.S. taxpayers will no longer subsidize low prices in the OECD countries with our tax code. Re-

search and development is important and that is why we give these huge tax breaks, but they do consumers little good if they can't afford the product.

The Prescription Price Equity Act is not the solution to the problems facing America's seniors' abilities to purchase prescription drugs. That problem will only be addressed by improving Medicare to include a prescription drug benefit. I have introduced separate legislation to achieve that goal and look forward to working with my colleagues to achieve that vital Medicare improvement this year.

The Prescription Drug Equity Act is important because it would end the abuse of the U.S. tax code to subsidize an industry that has so far refused to treat American consumers fairly. I urge my colleagues to join with me in support of this legislation to end pharmaceutical companies' abilities to profit at the expense of American taxpayers.

TRIBUTE TO JEFFREY FULLER

HON. GARY G. MILLER

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 15, 2000

Mr. GARY MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I am very honored to rise before you today to acknowledge the achievements and contributions of Mr. Jeffrey Fuller, President of the Montclair, California Chamber of Commerce. Under his leadership, the Chamber has succeeded in expanding its role in the promotion of local businesses, public policy and community involvement.

During Mr. Fuller's tenure, the Montclair Chamber of Commerce has expanded its membership by 20 percent, increased cash reserves for future expansion and upgraded its computer system to better serve local businesses and residents. At the same time, he reinstated the Chamber's involvement with the State of the City address and organized the first annual Montclair Safety Fair and Business Expo.

Mr. Fuller has tirelessly fought to preserve the spirit of the American dream. I appreciate his work and wish him well in his future endeavors.

INTRODUCTION OF THE OMBUDSMAN REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2000

HON. MICHAEL BILIRAKIS

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, February 15, 2000

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the Ombudsman Reauthorization Act of 2000. This legislation is a companion to S. 1763, which was introduced last year by Senator ALLARD of Colorado. The bill reauthorizes the Office of the National Solid Waste and Superfund Ombudsman within the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

I have experienced first-hand the important work of the National Superfund Ombudsman in connection with the Stauffer Chemical

Superfund Site, which is located in my congressional district in Tarpon Springs, Florida.

I fought tirelessly with my constituents for years to have the Stauffer site designated as a federal Superfund site. In 1994, the Stauffer site was finally included on the National Priorities List. It has been a long and tedious process since then. After six years, we are still waiting for the cleanup to begin. Clearly, this process is taking too long. The Superfund program must be streamlined to make it work within reasonable time frames—consistent with public expectations.

All of my constituents agree on the need for prompt cleanup of the Stauffer site. The question is how and when this will be accomplished in a manner consistent with protecting the public health and safety.

I joined with many of my constituents in repeatedly urging the EPA to carefully consider the unique geography of the Tarpon Springs area, with a particular focus on our sources of drinking water. In 1996, I was pleased to help secure funding for the Pinellas and Pasco County Technical Assistance Grant (Pi-PATAG) to monitor cleanup activities at the Stauffer site. Throughout the years, I have sponsored several public meetings and written many letters regarding necessary standards for the cleanup of the site.

The process of selecting a remedy that is both cost-effective and protective of the public health and safety has been extremely difficult. The affected parties have different opinions regarding the most appropriate solution to the problem, and many area residents feel that they have been "shut out" of the process.

Mr. Speaker, if anyone deserves to have their voice heard in the debate on cleanup of a hazardous waste site, it should be the local citizens who live in the surrounding neighborhoods.

At my request, the National Superfund Ombudsman, Robert Martin, has launched an independent review of the EPA's proposed cleanup plan for the Stauffer site. To date, Mr. Martin has participated in two public meetings I have sponsored, which were held on December 2, 1999, and February 12, 2000.

These discussions have provided an opportunity for local residents, technical experts, Stauffer company representatives, and federal, state and local officials to express their concerns directly to the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman is continuing to gather additional information and will not make recommendations until the investigation is completed.

During the course of the public meetings, it has become apparent that certain hydrogeological issues were not addressed before the proposed cleanup plan was advanced by the Stauffer Management Company and the EPA. For example, no studies regarding the possibility of sinkholes were conducted prior to the proposal of the remedy outlined in the Record of Decision. Because of Florida's unique environment, sinkholes pose a serious concern for the residents of the surrounding community. If contaminated soil collapses into the groundwater, more than 30 contaminants could be introduced into the area's drinking water supply.

The effect of contaminants from the site on local groundwater is an issue that demands further scrutiny. There has been conflicting