

into their eyes and to hear their stories. And the pain that they experience on a daily basis is heart wrenching.

There are 10,000 American children who have been taken to foreign countries; and it is time for Congress, the media, and the American people to focus their attention on these children and bring them home to their rightful parents. These stories are about families, about reuniting children and parents. When we look at a globe, we may see boundaries; but when it comes to reuniting families, we must know no boundaries.

Tomorrow I will tell the story of Saif Ahmed, a young boy from my hometown who was abducted by his father and is now being illegally held in Egypt. The meetings last week and the 1-minute addresses that will tell the story of these international abductions are just the first steps in what will be an ongoing dialogue with the American people to bring our children home.

CENSUS 2000

(Mr. MILLER of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the census is just weeks away. In fact, in remote regions of our Nation such as Alaska, the enumeration has already begun. Next month, 119 million households will receive their census forms in the mail. One of the most important tools the bureau is using to promote returning census forms is called the Census in the Schools project, which strives to help students learn what a census is and why it is important to them, their families, and the community; increase participation in the census 2000; to galvanize students, teachers, and families to support the census; and to recruit teachers and parents to work as census takers and in other support jobs.

I have participated in several of these census in the schools programs in my district and here in the District of Columbia. I can say firsthand that the children get enthusiastic about supporting the census and getting their parents to return the forms. I encourage all my colleagues, both Democrats and Republicans, to conduct a census in the schools program in their district to promote this vital, important civic responsibility.

IT IS TIME TO DUMP THE TAX CODE

(Mr. TRAFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, our Tax Code costs us \$140 billion a year. There are over 200 forms. All our income, savings, education, and investments are taxed. Even business taxes

are passed on to us. We are even taxed for marital sex. Beam me up. It is time to pass a flat national retail sales tax, 15 percent. No more income taxes, no more taxes on savings, no more forms, no more deadlines, no more accountants, no more lawyers, no more receipts, no more Internal Revenue Service. It is time, ladies and gentlemen of Congress.

I yield back this Communist, un-American Tax Code by saying to both parties: tax this.

SIGN THE PRESCRIPTION DRUG DISCHARGE PETITION

(Mr. UDALL of New Mexico asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. UDALL of New Mexico. Mr. Speaker, today Members of this Chamber will have the opportunity to sign the prescription drug discharge petition that will bring this issue to the floor of this body. Members will have to decide, will they help the people of their districts or continue the price discrimination of the big drug companies?

Many New Mexicans have told me how the high cost of prescription drugs affects their lives. One of my constituents, Suzette Binder of Santa Fe, wrote to me:

We are crippled financially because of diabetic pill costs for which there is no generic brand. We live in retirement on the same money we had 10 years ago. But the money goes like the wind and drug costs are one of the major causes. Do what you can.

Mr. Speaker, during the January recess, I heard from many people that expressed similar sentiments to me. I firmly believe widespread price discrimination is wrong.

I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to sign the petition. No one in America should ever have to decide between needed medication and food.

HOUSE IS WORKING TO ELIMINATE MARRIAGE TAX PENALTY AND SENIOR EARNINGS PENALTY

(Mr. WELLER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, this House is making progress. This past week we passed legislation to address what I consider to be the most unfair aspect of the Tax Code, the marriage tax penalty suffered by 25 million married working couples who pay \$1,400 on average in higher taxes just because they are married.

Later on today in the Committee on Ways and Means, we are going to move legislation that eliminates the earnings penalty on senior citizens who are on Social Security who need to continue working or who want to continue

working and right now they are punished. In fact, \$2 out of \$3 of their Social Security benefits if they earn more than \$17,000 are taxed and taken away just because they want to work. That is wrong. That is what that is all about. We want to bring fairness to the Tax Code. That is why we worked to eliminate the marriage tax penalty.

My hope is our friends in the Senate will join with us. My hope is those on the other side of the aisle will join with us and make it a bipartisan effort to eliminate the marriage tax penalty and to eliminate the earnings penalty on our senior citizens. It is all about fairness.

IT IS TIME TO PROVIDE RELIEF FOR SENIORS FROM THE HIGH COST OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

(Mr. ALLEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, from Maine to California, seniors cannot afford to buy the medicines that their doctors tell them they have to take. Why? Because the pharmaceutical industry engages in widespread price discrimination against seniors. Seniors pay twice as much as the drug companies' best customers. They pay 70 percent more than Canadians and 100 percent more than Mexicans. They are discriminated against. In short, the most profitable industry in the country is charging the highest prices in the world to people who can least afford it.

Today, we Democrats are signing a discharge petition to bring two bills to the floor, one bill to give all seniors a discount and the second bill to provide universal prescription drug coverage on Medicare. It is time to act. We should act now, sign the discharge petition and give our seniors some relief.

REPUBLICANS STAND FIRM ON BUDGET PRIORITIES

(Mr. KINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, we are continuing right now the very important budget negotiation process. One thing that the Republican Party stands firm on is that we have to meet our Social Security/Medicare obligations. Last year our budget's first priority was to put aside \$1.9 trillion for Social Security and Medicare. The second step is debt reduction. Last year, we put aside \$2 trillion for debt reduction. And then after those three things have happened, and only after those three things happened, was there a trigger for tax relief. This year we passed the marriage tax penalty because it is not fair that if you live with each other you pay less taxes than if you are married. We passed that out of the House.

We hope the Senate will pass it, and we hope the President will not veto it as he already has promised to do.

But the second part of that tax relief for tax fairness is to say to a senior, if you are working, you should not be penalized on your Social Security, because people are living longer, the needs are greater, and people need to work and want to work. It is healthy. There are lots of benefits to it. But if they do make this decision, they should not be penalized under Social Security.

The Republican Party will be having this bill in committee today. I hope we get it on the floor soon and pass it so that the Senate can.

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MAKE PRESCRIPTION MEDICINE AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, our seniors face skyrocketing prices for prescription drugs. Many of my constituents have written to me about having to choose between buying food and paying for the life-saving medicines that they need. For millions of seniors, a prescription drug benefit is the difference between getting the medicine they need for healthy, independent lives, and pain and suffering. For those who are skipping meals or missing rent payments, a prescription drug benefit is a necessity that would bring dignity to their lives.

I urge my colleagues today to sign the petitions at the desk to allow a debate on proposals that would end price discrimination and provide a prescription drug benefit for all seniors. We have an historic opportunity to make medicine affordable and accessible. We could do this in a heartbeat if the Republican leadership would allow debate on this floor.

Modern science has blessed us with many wonderful new medicines, but if seniors cannot afford them, these medicines are of little use. I implore my colleagues, sign the petitions at the desk. Begin substantive discussion on how to make prescription drugs affordable to the people who need them.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT NEEDED NOW

(Mrs. THURMAN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. THURMAN. Mr. Speaker, today we have heard about the 24 million people we supposedly helped last week. Well, let us talk about the 39 million people we could help that are under Medicare.

Let me just explain to you that this is a dollars and cents issue for us. We are grappling with the trust fund on Medicare and making sure that the expenses are kept down. Well, there is one way you can do that, and the one way you can do that is to make sure that seniors get their prescription drugs.

Let me just give you an example of what somebody wrote to me in my district. "My mom and dad do not have prescription drugs coverage, therefore must pay full price for all of their drugs. Mom has been cutting her cholesterol pill, Zocor, in half, so it will last two months. The pharmacist says they will not be effective and she is endangering her health. The prescription drug went from \$80.49 at the beginning of last year to \$95.99."

What do you think the cost of this is when this woman ends up in the hospital because she cannot take the medicine that is going to keep her healthy?

We need to make sure Members are signing this discharge petition so we can have an honest debate on this floor to help the 39 million people, and that number is growing.

AMERICA NEEDS A PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

(Mr. FORD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FORD. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge this Congress to take steps towards enacting a comprehensive prescription drug benefit. We have heard from so many of our colleagues why this is important, not only to their constituents, but constituents around the Nation.

Since the creation of the polio vaccine almost 50 years ago, the United States has been the engine of worldwide medical advancement. The finest doctors in the world are trained at our medical schools. Our government funds cutting-edge research at the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control.

American pharmaceutical companies are at the forefront of innovation. American innovation in the prescription drug industry is the envy of the world. They are producing new drugs that will allow people to lead healthier, happier, and longer lives.

But in America today, those most in need of those life-sustaining and life-saving drugs frequently find themselves on buses bound for Canada to find affordable prescription drugs.

Prescription drugs are an integral part of health care, especially for seniors. But at least 13 million Medicare beneficiaries have no drug coverage at all. Seniors often have to pay three times as much for drugs than those under the age of 65. It is unfair and it is wrong.

This is an issue that is critical to the citizens of my District and my State. In 1998, Tennessee led the Nation in prescription drug use, with a per capita consumption of 40 percent above the national average.

It is time for a Medicare prescription drug benefit. I urge my colleagues to sign the discharge petition.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICES TOO HIGH FOR SENIORS

(Mr. GREEN of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this Congress should have an open floor debate on legislation to help seniors afford the high cost of prescription drugs. We cannot sit on this issue any longer.

It is estimated we have 13 million seniors who do not have prescription drug coverage, and the number is increasing rapidly, almost as rapidly as the cost of the drugs they need. These seniors worked hard and paid into the system their entire lives, but now must choose between buying their prescriptions or their groceries. Seniors tell me they have to skip their medication to make it last longer.

I recently sent out a questionnaire to constituents in my District in Houston to learn what they think Congress' priorities should be. I received many responses from seniors saying Congress must act immediately to help them with the high cost of prescription drugs.

I heard from seniors like Norma Keyes of Houston who writes, "I need help with my prescriptions. I spend over half my Social Security on prescriptions. I can't get enough money to pay for my house and taxes."

Joyce Belyeu wrote, "I am now retired after 53 years of working. I have Medicare and a supplement, but no prescription drug benefit at all. I can't afford the \$250 per month for prescription drugs, so I can not take the prescription daily. I skip days."

We need to do better, and this Congress must do it.

TIME TO DO RIGHT BY OUR SENIORS ON PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

(Mr. SHOWS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHOWS. Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to visit with many of my senior citizens to talk about the high cost of medicine.

Let me tell you about one of my constituents, Ms. Lucille Bruce. Ms. Bruce lives in Clinton, Mississippi. She enjoyed all the freedoms of being a senior citizen until she started to pay the high cost of prescription medication