

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.

□ 1045

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