

this Senator ready and willing to move forward with that challenge. I support Senator SNOWE's and Senator KERRY's efforts to hold more hearings on reauthorization, and I offer to help them in any way I can to ensure it happens.

Let's commit ourselves to have a productive, comprehensive dialogue on a national policy. Let's commit to reaching a consensus that will allow our Councils and fisheries to pursue this innovative, effective solution that can work for fishing families, fisheries, conservation and consumers.

RELIEF NEEDED FROM RISING PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRICES

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to review where we stand, near the conclusion of the 106th Congress, on the subject of prescription drugs. Few issues have caught the public's attention more than this one, and few are more deserving of our attention.

We live at a time when we can clearly discern remarkable benefits from all manner of drugs. It is nothing short of miraculous when we consider the relative ease and success of today's treatment of common disorders, as compared with that of only two or three generations ago.

When World War II began, for example, penicillin and other similar antibiotics were known only to a small number of scientists. At the conclusion of the War in 1945, penicillin was widely available, used not only for battle wounds but for infectious diseases in the general public as well. Patients with high blood pressure or high cholesterol levels were, at best, only partially and inadequately treated in the 1940's and 1950's. Now success is the rule, rather than the exception. Calvin Coolidge's son died in 1924 as a result of a blister and a skin infection after playing tennis at the White House. An infection like that today would be treated as simple, outpatient therapy.

While these examples are noteworthy and provide us with a valuable perspective of times gone by, the hard, cold fact is that many of these modern miracles are still out of the reach of too many American citizens. They simply cannot afford the drugs that might so often prove lifesaving, because of either no insurance or lack of drug coverage within their insurance.

Why is this? Because, astronomical prices have come hand-in-hand with the great improvements in drug therapy. Spending for prescription drugs in the United States doubled between 1990 and 1998. In each of the five years between 1993 and 1998, prescription drug spending increased by an average of 12.4 percent. In 1999, the increase was 19 percent. We could go into all the reasons, but the fact remains that prescription drug prices are high and getting higher.

Many millions of Americans, both Medicare age and younger have either

inadequate or no prescription drug insurance at all. A by-product of no coverage is that these patients wind up paying the highest rates of anyone—an average of 15 percent more than those with insurance. Many of these uninsured, including the seniors often called "The Greatest Generation" are not filling prescriptions because of their cost—choosing between food and medicine. Or they split pills in half to make them go farther. This is shameful. These are very real every day problems that beg for help.

So, given the fact of these well documented problems, what is the track record of this Congress in helping the citizens in my home state of South Dakota and the citizens of the United States? What do I tell my constituents back in Sioux Falls, or Custer, or Milbank when they ask me why nothing has been done to help them? I wish I could tell them that help is on the way. I wish I could tell them that the majority leadership heard their voices and scheduled the hearings and called for the votes. But, that just is not the case.

Early in this Congress, I introduced, along with Senator KENNEDY, the Prescription Drug Fairness for Seniors of Act of 1999". This bill would provide Medicare beneficiaries access to prescription drugs at the same low prices that drug manufacturers offer their most favored customers, such as large insurance companies, HMO's, and the Federal Government. Without cost to the taxpayers, my proposal could save seniors approximately 40 percent on their drug bills, yet we did not see a vote on this floor.

Similarly, in May of this year, I introduced the Generic Pharmaceutical Access and Choice for Consumers Act". This bill encourages the broader use of generics in Federal health programs, a straight-forward common sense approach, yet we did not see a vote on this floor.

Other measures that could have made a tremendous difference to millions of Americans also languished. This Congress should have passed a voluntary universal Medicare drug benefit plan. It did not.

This Congress should have addressed rising drug prices. It did not.

This Congress should have passed a truly strong and effective drug reimportation plan. It did not.

This Congress should have passed a generic drug access plan. It did not.

Mr. President, let me conclude by stating that these problems will not go away. Nor will my commitment for their resolution on behalf of the people of South Dakota and Americans across this country. The hope that this Congress will seriously address prescription drug costs and provide comprehensive Medicare drug coverage yet this year is all but an aspiration at this point. That being said, in a few months

we will commence the 107th Congress. I will continue to do all that I can to work with my colleagues and urge the earliest possible discussions regarding prescription drugs in committee rooms and on the floor of the Senate. I believe this is the wish of most of the members in this body, as well as the wish and hope of the American people.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

RECOGNITION OF RHODE B. (R.B.) CAUSEY, SR. AS ARKANSAS' 2000 PRIME TIME AWARD RECIPIENT

• Mrs. LINCOLN. Mr. President, in October, the Special Committee on Aging joined Green Thumb to recognize the enormous contributions that this year's Green Thumb "Prime Time Award" recipients are making to their community and our country.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program is one of the best kept secrets in the country. This program is an innovative and cost-effective federal initiative that allows our nation's seniors to remain productive and independent by contributing their talent and services to their communities.

Some of Arkansas' finest employment programs for seniors are sponsored by Green Thumb, and I am pleased to recognize Arkansas' 2000 Prime Time Award recipient, Rhode B. (R.B.) Causey, Sr.

R.B., now 96 years old, grew up in a family of 13 children and sold business supplies and office machines during the Depression. These experiences, coupled with his ingenuity, persistence, and strong work ethic, prepared R.B. to branch out on his own in 1952 and open a business supply company. Today, R.B. and his son own and operate the R.B. Causey Company in Little Rock.

As if going in to work every day wasn't enough to keep him busy, R.B. also manages his own farm where he produces soybean and rice crops. The farm is also home to his extensive bee-keeping hobby.

R.B.'s recipe for success: "Don't give up, stay involved, do something." provides a great example to all of us about the importance of staying active in our "golden years."

I am fortunate to know R.B. and other Arkansas senior workers who are so vibrant and enthusiastic about their jobs. I only hope that when I am 75, 80, or 85 I will have half of their energy and zest for life!

America's senior population has great value. They have earned our nation's respect and support. Green Thumb and other senior employment programs allow communities to continue to reap the wisdom of our nation's talented seniors citizens. ●