

the House to the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe:

Mr. CARDIN, Maryland;
Ms. SLAUGHTER, New York;
Mr. HASTINGS, Florida;
Mr. MCINTYRE, North Carolina.

REINING IN THE COST OF MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG ENTITLEMENT

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

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, last week we heard projections that the prescription drug benefit is going to be far more expensive than we figured. Now, many of us never believed that it would cost just \$400 million, and the fact that it is much higher than that is not surprising at all.

I would encourage the President and our leadership to work with us to be able to rein in this monster that we have created.

Over a period of 75 years, the initial estimates were that this would add \$7 trillion in unfunded liabilities. I should point out that every dime to pay for this new benefit is borrowed. Therefore, every dime will be paid for by our kids and our grandkids.

It is time to get the bridle on the horse before the horse leaves the barn, and we need to work now, before this benefit starts next year, to make sure that we can reign in the costs.

Mr. Speaker, last week the White House released budget projections that show that the cost of the prescription drug benefit that Congress added to Medicare last year could balloon to \$1.2 trillion over the next ten years. The initial price estimate of the new entitlement was \$400 billion.

Frankly, the initial estimate of \$400 billion was more than many of us could stomach, but we knew that \$400 billion was a lowball estimate and the real cost was sure to be higher. Having said that, it gives none of us pleasure to say "see, we told you so."

When President Bush first proposed the new prescription drug benefit, it was targeted and means-tested for low-income seniors who did not currently have prescription drug coverage. President Bush's plan also coupled the new benefit with some needed reforms of the Medicare program.

It should come as no surprise that by the time Congress was done with the package, it looked nothing like the President's proposal. Congress expanded coverage to all seniors and yanked the reforms that would have helped curb future costs from the bill.

What does come as a surprise is President Bush's recent threat to veto any attempt by Congress to go back and fix our mistake.

Shortly after Congress passed the new prescription drug entitlement, and the initial cost estimate was already going up, I introduced a bill that would cap the cost of the program at the initial estimate of \$400 billion. If the cost overran the estimate, my bill would have required Congress to offset the difference or scale back the entitlement.

I plan to reintroduce that legislation shortly, and I urge Congress to take it up quickly. Whether or not Congress acts on this specific piece of legislation, we need to begin talking about ways to control the monster we created.

President Bush sent over a budget to Congress a couple of weeks ago that proposed cutting or killing over 150 programs. Of course, Members of Congress immediately began maneuvering to make sure that their pet projects did not get the axe. I think the President is on the right track by trying to pare back congressional spending and I will certainly be doing what I can to help him in that effort. However, the truth is that, compared to federal mandatory spending on entitlement programs like Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security, Congress and President Bush are quibbling over pocket change.

If President Bush is serious about controlling federal spending, and I believe that he is, he ought to reconsider his threat to veto any attempt to pare back the prescription drug entitlement.

President Bush's initial prescription drug benefit was much more fiscally responsible than the proposal he signed into law. I hope that if there is an effort in Congress to make the prescription drug benefit look more like President Bush's original plan, he will embrace it rather than fight it.

SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

SMART SECURITY AND FISCAL YEAR 2006 DEFENSE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, the Bush's administration national security priorities are so out of balance that it is hard to know where to begin. Between the debacle in Iraq, the failure to address America's true homeland security needs and funding for research on new nuclear weapons, there are plenty of options to choose from.

Last October during the final Presidential debate before the November election, President Bush claimed that the gravest threat America faces is the threat of nuclear attack. Unfortunately, the President has done very little to address this threat.

One of the primary nuclear threats America faces is the development of such hostile weapons by countries like Iran and North Korea. That is why we need to engage these nations in aggressive diplomacy, not aggressive saber rattling.

Earlier this week, North Korea indicated that it wishes to hold bilateral talks with the United States, presumably to receive financial assistance in exchange for dismantling its nuclear

weapons program. Iran, on the other hand, feels threatened by recent whispers that the Bush administration might attempt a military assault on their nuclear weapons facilities.

We absolutely must negotiate with both countries. After using the U.S. military to take down Saddam Hussein, this President probably thinks that negotiations are beneath him; but I have got news for the Bush administration. Negotiations work and foreign assistance works. We need to start relying more on nonmilitary security tools to work out our international differences.

The other major nuclear threat comes not from foreign countries, but from terrorist organizations like al Qaeda. To address this threat, we must secure the nuclear stockpiles that are out there before they get into the hands of terrorists.

Most people agree that the best program to secure nuclear materials is the Cooperative Threat Reduction program, or CTR, which enlists the Department of Defense to dismantle nuclear warheads, reduce nuclear stockpiles, and secure nuclear weapons and materials in the states of the former Soviet Union.

CTR is crucial in keeping nuclear weapons out of the hands of terrorists. Terrorists know that it would not be difficult to steal material from poorly guarded nuclear plants in Russia. That is why it is important to increase our funding for CTR and provide funding to extend the program so that other regions of the world can be included.

Last year, the Cooperative Threat Reduction program received only \$409 million from the Defense budget, and the Department of Defense did not even use all of this money. We should triple or quadruple our funds and our efforts for CTR in the fiscal year 2006 budget, and we should extend this vital program to other countries where nuclear materials are not safely guarded, countries like Iran, North Korea, Libya, and Pakistan.

Instead of continuing down our current path, Mr. Speaker, I believe we must pursue a new national, smarter security strategy that I call SMART security, which is a Sensible Multilateral American Response to Terrorism for the 21st century.

I have also introduced H. Con. Res. 35, legislation that would pursue a smarter strategy for rebuilding Iraq. Twenty-eight of my House colleagues have joined me in offering this important legislation.

The immoral and ill-conceived war in Iraq has already claimed the lives of nearly 1,500 American troops. Another 11,000 have been gravely wounded as a result of this war, and the 150,000 soldiers that remain in Iraq are sitting ducks, sitting ducks for Iraq's growing insurgency. I am sure that many of these soldiers understand what our