

PRESCRIPTION DRUG INFLATION:
WHY WE NEED TO PASS A MEDI-
CARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PRO-
GRAM

HON. FORTNEY PETE STARK

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 12, 1998

Mr. STARK. Mr. Speaker, last week, I introduced H.R. 4753, a bill to provide a Medicare prescription drug benefit.

Prescription drug expenses are projected to continue to inflate at a rate far above the general inflation in the economy and in medical care. More and more Americans and Medicare retirees will be facing financial hardship in paying for prescription drugs in the coming years. A national prescription drug insurance program, which would utilize the buying efficiencies of the Medicare program, is the best way to help meet this growing problem.

The September/October 1998 issue of Health Affairs contains a major article by HCFA actuaries and economists entitled, "The Next Ten Years of Health Spending: What Does the Future Hold?" Following are the paragraphs from the article describing anticipated prescription drug spending. Clearly, if these predictions are half correct, Congress should act to help.

Growth in prescription drug spending is expected to continue at a relatively rapid pace, supported by continued declines in our out-of-pocket payments for drugs associated with the shift of Medicare patients into managed care and an acceleration in new product introductions. Drug-price inflation began to rise in early 1998 and is expected to exceed its relatively slow pace of recent years through 2007.

Drugs. Recent rapid growth in drug costs over the past two years has often been cited as a contributing factor to health plans' escalating costs. Recent higher spending growth is almost entirely accounted for by rising utilization (number of prescriptions) and intensity (including changes in size and mix of prescriptions). Drug price inflation (as measured by the CPI for prescription drugs), which has historically been a major factor in rapid growth, has been relatively restrained since 1993. Excess inflation for prescription drugs averaged only 0.5 percent for 1993-1997, following a period (1982-1993) of 5.3 percent average growth.

Response by both consumers and health plans to slower growth in consumers' out-of-pocket payments for drugs has clearly played a role in the recent rise in utilization. In addition to slower drug price inflation, growth in out-of-pocket expenditures has been low since 1993, which reflects the shift to managed care, in which copayments for drugs tend to be much lower.

Growth in drug spending is expected to accelerate moderately through 1998 and to sustain fairly rapid rates of growth through 2007. Real per capita growth is expected to average just below 6 percent, about equal to the average during the 1980's. While drug prices are projected to accelerate from recent lows, average inflation rates are assumed to remain below the exceptionally rapid pace of the 1980's, with excess drug price inflation averaging 1.7 percent for 1998-2007. Rapid growth in use and intensity are expected to continue to account for most of the growth in spending.

AUTHORIZING THE COMMITTEE ON
THE JUDICIARY TO INVESTIGATE
WHETHER SUFFICIENT GROUNDS
EXIST FOR THE IMPEACHMENT
OF WILLIAM JEFFERSON CLIN-
TON, PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED
STATES

SPEECH OF

HON. SAXBY CHAMBLISS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, October 8, 1998

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. Speaker, "The House of Representatives shall have the sole power of impeachment." I take these words directly from Article I, Section 2 of the Constitution of the United States. Reading further, "The President shall be removed from office on impeachment for, and conviction of, treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors" (Article II, Section 4). It is this Constitution I swore an oath to uphold as Representative of the people of Georgia's 8th district, and it is the demands of this Constitution that I must interpret as I prepare to vote on this resolution to authorize a full inquiry to determine whether sufficient grounds exist to impeach President William J. Clinton.

Recently, the House of Representatives received the report of the Independent Counsel, Kenneth Starr, as his investigation relates to White House response to certain activities. While I condemn the President's decision to carry on a sexual relationship he has now come to admit, the substance of this relationship is irrelevant to the decision we face today.

The independent Counsel has reported 11 separate counts that may serve as the basis for the impeachment of the President. Among them, they include obstruction of justice, perjury, and witness tampering. Note that not one of the counts reported to the House addresses the right or wrong of the President's relationship with the former intern. The report contains allegations of activity that are inconsistent with the laws of this land, laws the President has sworn to uphold, laws the President and no man are above.

The decision we face today is as follows: Based on the report of the Independent Counsel, should the House of Representatives direct its committee on the Judiciary to make such investigation as is necessary to determine whether the facts warrant the bringing of articles of impeachment to the full House. Having had the opportunity to review the report of the Independent Counsel, my answer must be 'yes.'

While I regret much of the detail associated with this inquiry, the responsibility for it may not be laid at the foot of the Congress or the Independent Counsel. I am confident that this House can and will pursue this inquiry with the import and dignity that will be demanded by the American people and the Constitution, itself. I do not take this action lightly, but if this Nation is to continue as the beacon of freedom, the seat of democracy, and if it is to continue to be in the words of Abraham Lincoln a "Government of the people, by the people, and for the people," we must not shy away from our responsibility. Over its history this great Nation has many times offered the ultimate sacrifice of its sons and daughters to protect our constitutional form of government.

If for no other reason, it is for those fallen Americans that we must enforce the rule of law today.

Mr. Speaker, it is with a sad, yet resolved, heart that I support the resolution before us today to authorize the inquiry into whether sufficient grounds exist to impeach President William J. Clinton.

IN PRAISE OF CHARLOTTE, NORTH
CAROLINA'S "UNITY AGAINST
HUNGER AND POVERTY"

HON. SUE MYRICK

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, October 12, 1998

Mrs. MYRICK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Charlotte, North Carolina's "Unity Against Hunger and Poverty." For years, this coalition of Charlotte area anti-hunger and homelessness programs has worked hard to care for the needy of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Recently, the members of "Unity Against Hunger and Poverty" sent a letter to my colleague, Representative TONY HALL of Ohio, praising Mr. HALL for his tireless efforts to secure full federal funding for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP). I am submitting the text of the group's letter for the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD because it serves as a suitable tribute to both the work of my friend, Mr. HALL, as well as to the dedication and efforts of "Unity Against Hunger and Poverty."

I will always support full funding for the TEFAP program. TEFAP provides vital assistance to our nation's local anti-hunger programs, providing food banks with 20% of the food they need every year. At the same time, TEFAP is a model of government efficiency. While the food stamp program returns only four cents of every dollar to agricultural producers, the TEFAP program returns eighty-five cents of every dollar back to America's farmers. It simply makes sense for the government to purchase excess agricultural commodities to distribute to food banks. By doing so, we can help families get through hard times and can help farmers deal with low commodity prices.

AUGUST 13, 1998.

Hon. TONY P. HALL,
House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE HALL: For over twenty years, you have led the fight against domestic and international hunger in the halls of Congress. So often you must have felt alone and discouraged, but still you persevered. People you will never know have benefited from your work and the battles you have fought.

Today we, the members of Unity Against Hunger and Poverty in Charlotte, send this letter to express our heartfelt gratitude. Your beacon has led us, pointing the way as we battled the darkness of hunger and poverty in our daily work.

Your leadership transcends Ohio's Third Congressional District. Indeed, your spirit has touched us here in North Carolina. We are better as professionals and as human beings because you inspired us with your example of hope laced with action.

Thank you for bearing the standard when so many others have fallen aside. We pray that you will be given the strength to continue.

Sincerely, the undersigned members,
Unity Against Hunger and Poverty:

LYN MORTON,