

their visas this way, never being interviewed by anyone in the consular office.

When the program began, it was advertised as helping qualified applicants obtain U.S. visas quickly and easily. Applicants will no longer have to take time off from work, they said, no longer have to wait in long lines or under the hot sun in crowded waiting rooms. I am quoting from State Department documents.

Here are some of the September 11 terrorists who came into this country under the visa express program. Salem Al-Hamzi, age 20, arrived in the United States with a tourist visa obtained through visa express.

Here is another one: Khalid Al-Midhar, a 25-year-old gentleman. He was one of the people on Flight 77 that crashed into the Pentagon.

Here is another one: Abdulaziz Al-Omari, 28, arrived in the U.S. on a tourist visa in June of 2001, a pilot of the American Airlines Flight 111 that crashed into the North Tower of the World Trade Centers.

Now, under this program, the Saudi citizens just go to a Saudi travel agent, and they fill out a two-page form. They paid a fee and went home and waited for their visas to arrive in the mail. There was no interview with any American official. One senior consular affairs official describes the program as an open-door policy for terrorists to come into the United States.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to me that we have our priorities out of order here. This is not customer service; it is national security. Visa issuance must be in the homeland security system from top to bottom. This is the only way the Secretary of Homeland Security will be able to completely and thoroughly protect our borders, by preventing terrorists from ever making it into our homeland.

We must change the culture of the way we issue visas. It is no longer sufficient for this process to be an entry-level position for a person at a college. It is simply too vital to our national security.

Mr. Speaker, security begins abroad. I feel the burden is on the administration to prove to us why the Bureau of Consular Affairs is fragmented and a pseudo part of homeland security. Thus far, they have not convinced me of the need for this fragmentation in this area. I support putting all of consular affairs in homeland security.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. MILLENDER-McDONALD addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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DRUG INDUSTRY NEEDS TO CLEAN UP ITS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KERNs). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, earlier today I heard a Republican member of the Committee on Ways and Means absolutely distort the truth about the Democrats' prescription drug plan, saying that it requires that seniors go into the Democrats' plan whether or not they choose to, whether or not they already have drug coverage. There is no place in this debate for those kinds of fabrications and those kind of lies, and I just want to set the record straight.

Mr. Chairman, the prescription drug industry needs to clean up its act. You know it. I know it. American consumers know it.

The brand name drug industry has no qualms about charging American consumers the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs, even though American tax dollars and American contributions to private foundations fund nearly half their research, even though the prescription drug industry in this country is the most profitable industry in America, even though the prescription drug industry gets tax breaks so huge they have only half the tax liability of any other industry in this country, and even though more than 50 million Americans have no drug coverage, some of whom must choose between food and their medicine.

Prescription drugs are not a luxury item. It is not okay that the drug industry overcharges U.S. consumers for products our own tax dollars helped to produce. The drug industry has tremendous influence over this Congress and especially this White House. Unfortunately, the situation may have to get worse before the Federal Government finally takes a stand against the outrageous pricing schemes of the drug industry. Until that happens, market competition is the only tool we have to bring down prices.

When generics enter the market, the price typically drops as much as 90 percent. Market competition expands access to Americans who cannot afford the monopoly prices that are charged by the brand name companies. It spurs drug companies to earn their profits by developing new drugs, rather than by overcharging for existing products. It is much easier, obviously, to overcharge for existing products than to develop new ones. The brand name drug industry has taken to exploiting loopholes in the FDA drug approval process to block generic competition. So not only do drug companies charge Americans the highest price in the world while those drugs are under patent, these companies then try to charge Americans ridiculous prices after their patents expire by blocking generics from entering the market.

You would think Congress would at least be interested in keeping drug companies from gaming the patent system as a means of cheating American consumers.

Governors from both parties, major businesses like GM and Marriott and Verizon and unions and consumer groups and health insurers have demanded that Congress close these legal loopholes. Closing these loopholes would save American consumers literally hundreds of billions of dollars in the next 10 years. Yet, last week, Republican leadership blocked action on an amendment that would end drug industry abuses. This amendment simply would have prevented drug companies from artificially extending their patents, the drugs' protected patents and stop them from gaming the FDA patent system.

Last week, Republican leadership blocked consideration of this amendment. They would not, in fact, even let the Committee on Energy and Commerce consider the amendment. It may not have been a coincidence that the same week that our committee was marking up the prescription drug bill, that same week that committee adjourned early one afternoon to go to a Republican fund-raiser which was underwritten by the prescription drug industry. The chair of that Republican fund-raiser which netted \$30 million was the CEO of a British drug company, GlaxoWellcome, donated \$250,000 to the Republican cause. The CEO was joined by CEOs of other drug companies which contributed \$50,000, \$100,000, \$200,000, \$250,000 to this Republican fund-raiser.

It should also come as no surprise that the next day after the fund-raiser Republicans returned to the committee and, in regular party line votes, voted against any kind of real reform, any kind of pro-senior prescription drug plan.

The Democratic prescription drug plan written by and for seniors will bring drug costs down. That is what seniors want. The Republican prescription drug plan written by and for the prescription drug industry does nothing to bring prices down. That is what prescription drug companies want.

I ask my colleagues to support the Democratic plan when it comes in front of the House and reject the drug-company-sponsored Republican plan.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mrs. CAPPS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CAPPS. Mr. Speaker, in 1965 we established Medicare because the private insurance industry demonstrated that it could not provide affordable access to health care for seniors, at least not at rates that seniors could afford. Now, 37 years later, this Congress will be considering important changes to