

month. Yes, their bill does not cap the drug premium. In fact, insurers would set the premium cost, and it would vary from plan to plan, place to place.

But let us ignore that flaw for a moment and assume it might be about \$35 a month. So that is \$420 a year for that premium. For the first \$250 you spend on prescription medication, this new plan will pay you exactly nothing. That is right. If you need no more than \$250 worth of medication, this plan will cost you \$670 a year, the \$35 monthly premium plus the \$250 deductible.

Now if you are one of every three Medicare beneficiaries who spend less than \$500 on medication every year, you are in for a treat. What would have cost you \$500 will cost you \$720 under the Republican plan. Yes, you would actually pay almost 50 percent more under their plan than you would pay without it.

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Maybe a person spends closer to \$1,000 a year, as half of the Medicare population does. If so, they do fare a bit better. If their medications will cost \$1,000, they will spend \$420 on the program, \$250 for the first batch of drugs and then 20 percent of the next \$750 they owe, or \$150. That adds up to \$820. They will have saved \$160.

But if someone is among the 30 percent of Medicare recipients that spends more than \$2,000 a year for drugs, I am afraid we have some bad news for them. Under the Republican plan, they are on their own for every dollar between \$2,000 and \$3,800. This plan will not pay them a cent.

Their plan is simply a sad attempt to gain political cover by sounding like they are working for and care about seniors while simultaneously draining Social Security and Medicare trust funds to pay for huge breaks for the superrich contributors.

So ignore the Republican rhetoric. We should provide seniors with a real and meaningful prescription drug benefit. We should encourage aggregate buying by groups of seniors, not sending each senior out there with some kind of expensive privatized plan in the rough waters of the marketplace in their very, very small canoes.

The first step to make Medicare and prescription medication available to our seniors at more affordable prices and to make them more available is to vote "no" on the risky Republican Medicare drug plan they intend to bring up this week.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KERNS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. NAPOLITANO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mrs. NAPOLITANO addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentle-

woman from Indiana (Ms. CARSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. CARSON of Indiana addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

ENSURING CONTINUITY OF LEGISLATIVE OPERATIONS DURING AN EMERGENCY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. LANGEVIN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to announce introduction of H.R. 5007, a bill to authorize the National Academy of Sciences and the Librarian of Congress to conduct a study on the feasibility and costs of implementing an emergency electronic communications system for Congress to ensure the continuity of legislative operations during an emergency.

Let me first express my most sincere gratitude to a man who illustrates the power of responsible, effective leadership, a man who made today possible and whom I am so proud to call my close friend, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY). The Chairman has devoted an immense amount of time to this issue of congressional continuity. He has led this House through one of the most difficult times in our history and has done so with great dignity. I honestly cannot thank him enough for his dedication and hard work in joining me in introducing H.R. 5007.

I also want to thank the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), the ranking member of the Committee on House Administration. He has provided the same kind of leadership, wisdom, and guidance in moving this issue through the legislative process. He has worked closely with me ever since I introduced legislation to investigate alternatives in conducting congressional business in the United States Capitol and surrounding areas if there was a future attack or disaster. I would like to thank him for his support and commitment throughout this process.

Mr. Speaker, many of my colleagues know that for months now I have promoted the establishment of an electronic communications system for an emergency situation. When I introduced the Ensuring Congressional Security and Continuity Act last year, I wanted to spur some meaningful dialogue among Members on what we need to do to prepare for what was once an unthinkable but now, according to our own Vice President, is inevitable. I am pleased to report that the dialogue has indeed begun.

On February 28, the House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on the Constitution began this dialogue with a hearing on how to replace Members if a significant number were killed or incapacitated in an attack. My good friend, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. BAIRD), has introduced some insightful legislation to address this very issue.

On May 1, I was proud to see the Committee on House Administration hold a hearing on my proposal and the various issues surrounding the use of technology to conduct congressional operations in an emergency situation.

On May 16, the gentleman from California (Mr. COX) and the gentleman from Texas (Mr. FROST) brought together chairmen, ranking members, and other leaders in this area to discuss congressional continuity issues. Since then, the Cox-Frost team has continued to study this issue in a bipartisan and thorough fashion.

September 11 and the subsequent anthrax attacks on our congressional offices exposed just how vulnerable we are, particularly because we are centrally located. While none of us wants to think about or face our mortality, especially at the hands of terrorists, we have to recognize that it could happen. It is our duty as Members of Congress to ensure this country remains safe and we leave the American public with a system that ensures our freedom and democracy will prevail over any catastrophe.

Mr. Speaker, today we can do just that by passing H.R. 5007. I urge the leadership to bring this bill to the floor as expediently as possible. I would also like to thank the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. NEY), the chairman; the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER), the ranking member; and their staffs for working with me to meet this objective.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

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

Mr. STRICKLAND. Mr. Speaker, the House is confronted with a major decision this week, and that is, whether or not to provide a prescription drug benefit for our senior population, and if we are to provide a benefit, what that benefit will look like.

In my district in southern and southeastern Ohio, I am continuously confronted by seniors who tell me of their difficulty in being able to get the medicines they need at an affordable cost, and so it is incumbent upon this House to take the action necessary to prevent our seniors from choosing between buying food and buying medicine or paying other essential bills. Nearly every Member of this House during the last election process made a commitment to their constituents that they would pass a meaningful, affordable prescription drug benefit; and if we do not do it, then shame on us.

The issues, though, that confront us are not only whether or not to provide the benefit but what kind of benefit. Sadly, the majority party in this House is proposing a benefit that, in my judgment, is worse than no benefit at all. It would be the first step toward the privatization of the Medicare system. It

would rely on the private insurance market to provide the benefit; and coming from a rural area, my fear is that there would be no company that would be willing to provide a drug-only policy for the constituents that I am charged to represent.

In my district, we used to have some Medicare+Choice programs, some HMO Medicare programs. We do not have them anymore because they did not make as much money as they wanted to make; and so they withdrew, leaving literally thousands of my constituents without that coverage. I think the same thing would likely happen with this proposed prescription drug benefit.

What seniors need and want is a benefit that is a part of the Medicare benefit package. They want a program that is as predictable and as reliable as is traditional Medicare; and they want a program that provides them with the benefit that is affordable, that has a defined package of benefits, which they know about and can depend upon; and they want a prescription drug benefit that gives them choice. And that is what the Democratic proposal will do.

There are differences between the Democrat and Republican proposals, and I would like to mention just a few of them. Our proposal would have a \$25-per-month premium. The Republican proposal would have a \$35-per-month premium, with no guarantee that that premium would not escalate, \$65 or \$85 or even more. So there is no predictability to the Republican premium as to affordability.

The program that I and my colleagues on this side of the aisle support has a \$100 deductible. The Republican proposal has a \$250 deductible. My side, the Democratic side, has a copayment of 20 percent, meaning that Medicare would pay 80 percent, and that is the same as the Republican side. However, on our side, we have a ²⁰/₆₀ copay for all of the drugs that a senior may need; and on the Republican side, there is an 80 percent copay for the first \$1,000 in medication. Only 50 percent would be paid by Medicare for the second \$1,000; and then there would be a huge gap and until a senior paid over \$3,700 out of their own pocket would the catastrophic plan kick in and then all the drugs would be paid for.

What is especially problematic is the fact that a charitable group or a friend, a church, would not be able to voluntarily contribute to that senior's medication costs to enable them to reach the catastrophic coverage; and in my district, many times local churches will recognize seniors who are having a difficult time getting the medicines they need and will voluntarily take up a collection or in other ways provide needed assistance.

So I hope the American people are watching because this is the defining issue of this session of the House of Representatives, and I hope they pay attention because there are vast differences between the two bills that will be considered on the floor this week.

PROTECTING OUR NATIONAL PARKS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to spend a few minutes this evening with some of my colleagues discussing the situation that we face as Americans across the country prepare to enjoy the July 4 holiday. For many people, it is an opportunity not just to reflect on the Declaration of Independence, the patriotic history of our country, but it is also an opportunity for families to come together to use this opportunity to join for family recreation, to vacation; and it sort of marks the first serious week of heavy utilization of our outstanding national park system.

These are an area that have proven to touch the hearts of many Americans. It dates back to the tenure of President Teddy Roosevelt, who was such an outstanding leader in terms of the park system and conservation; but sadly, Mr. Speaker, today more and more Americans as they turn to the park system are going to be looking at a state of our national parks and public lands that, frankly, is going to disappoint them. They are going to be assaulted in areas where there should not be allowed motorized vehicles.

There are problems of poor air quality that plague these jewels of our national park system. Air quality is a problem in the Grand Canyon, in Yosemite, in Yellowstone.

We have serious problems in terms of what has happened with the extraction of our country's mineral resources, where sadly our policies of today have not kept pace with the demands that have been placed upon them and what we now know about protection of the environment. Sadly, the Mining Act of 1872 continues on the books exactly, exactly as it was signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant 130 years ago.

During his Presidential campaign, George W. Bush spoke of protecting national parks as an ongoing responsibility and a shared commitment of the American people and their government.

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Mr. Speaker, I was one of the Americans who was cheered by these words by then Governor Bush because, frankly, although I disagreed with him about a number of his environmental policies and his stewardship in the State of Texas and while I was frankly dismayed as I saw the stewardship that occurred with the State park system in Texas, I was heartened by his words that were optimistic as far as what may occur with our national treasures.

However, Mr. Speaker, I am sad to say that since President Bush has assumed office I do not think any objective observer would suggest that he has

followed in the footsteps of Teddy Roosevelt, who President Bush called America's first environmental President.

My colleagues and I are here today to talk about the various threats to the serenity and wildlife of our national parks and to look at the unfortunate record that has been developed by the administration, although it is not too late to reverse course, and on behalf of the American public, we hope that they will.

The administration, as we speak, is moving to undo a national park service plan to phase out snowmobiles in Yellowstone in the Grand Teton National Parks, despite strong scientific evidence and overwhelming public support for a ban. This week, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. HOLT) and the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. SHAYS) will be introducing legislation to require as a matter of law the ban that was put in place by the Clinton Administration. I am proud that there are over 100 of us already in Congress who will be original co-sponsors of that legislation.

The administration has yet to argue forcefully and provide in its budgets new money to address the maintenance backlog in the national parks system. We have seen the administration propose a rollback of the Clean Air Act provisions which will actually increase air pollution in national parks from nearby power plants; and the President has claimed that he does not want to create any new parks, although he did sign a bill, in fairness, in February to create the Ronald Reagan Boyhood Home National Historic Site.

Meanwhile, there are bills for a number of important park sites that are not moving forward; and in the 2003 budget, the President has in his proposal eliminated funding for the Urban Parks and Recreation Recovery Program, an unfortunate development which I am hopeful Congress will be able to step up and countermand.

I am pleased to be joined this evening by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS), and I yield to the gentlewoman if she has some observations that she wishes to offer up at this point.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate this opportunity to have this special hour dedicated to our parks. Because as we go into our holiday season preparing for the 4th of July, there is going to be over 60 million people that will visit our Nation's national parks; and national parks create a place for families to recreate, to enjoy each other, to enjoy natural resources and learn about the world around us. All of our parks to me are national treasures and I know to many people.

Some of our most used parks are ones that I represent in my own district in the San Gabriel Valley in East Los Angeles out in California, and it is surprising, but the studies that I have seen regarding park space is despicable when it comes to low-income communities and where individuals do not