(Mr. MORAN of Kansas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

## DEMOCRATIC PRESCRIPTION DRUG BILL

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, the prescription drug bill we are introducing today is straightforward. It is easily distinguishable from the Republican bill introduced last week. There is no fine print in our bill. There are no holes in our prescription drug coverage. There are no question marks where the premium and cost-sharing requirements should be. The availability of coverage does not hinge on the Federal Government, unlike the Republican plan, showering the insurance industry with tax dollars so they will offer stand-alone drug plans.

One of the strongest points of the Democratic plan is that it is not endorsed by the drug industry. That is because we hold down drug costs by bringing down drug prices, not by shortchanging seniors on coverage. Our bill creates a drug coverage option for Medicare beneficiaries that is affordable, it is reliable, and I emphasize is at least as generous as the coverage available to Members of Congress.

Our bill strengthens Medicare, rather than snubbing it. It minimizes the hassle involved in getting drug benefits.

We add the drug coverage option to the Medicare benefits package. Seniors are not forced to go outside of Medicare and enroll in an insurance company HMO to get their drug benefits as they are required to do under the Republican plan.

Our bill takes action against inflated drug prices on behalf of every senior and every American consumer. The brand name drug industry has taken to exploiting loopholes in the FDA drug approval process to block generic competition and keep drug prices high. So not only the drug companies charge Americans the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs, while those drugs are still under patent, these companies, these drug companies continue to charge Americans ridiculously high prices even after the drugs have gone off patent, even after the patents expire, because they block generics, block competition from entering the market.

This gaming of the patent system is not theoretical. It happened with Paxil; it happened with BusPar; it happened with Prilosec; it happened with Neurontin; it happened with Wellbutrin. These are top-selling drugs. Seniors and other consumers who need these drugs have paid twice, three times, four times more than necessary for these products for months and sometimes for years because brand-name drug companies block legitimate generic competitors from the market. These big-name drug companies supported by Republicans over and over game the patent system.

While the Congressional Budget Office has not formally scored these provisions, their estimate suggests Medicare alone could save tens of billions of dollars if we make drug companies play fair. Needless to say, these provisions to bring drug prices down are not in the Republican bill. The drug industry, in fact, has ponied up $3 million, $3 million to back an ad campaign touting the Republican's bill, which protects the drug companies.

If drugmakers thought there was any chance the Republican's bill would reduce drug prices for Medicare enrollees, do my colleagues think they would endorse it? Of course not. The Republican bill has the drug industry's fingerprints all over it.

Our bill is admittedly more expensive than the Republican bill. It should be more expensive because our coverage is better. The Republican bill is dirt cheap for a reason. Their bill is most notable for the coverage it does not provide. It is basically one big disclaimer.

The last thing we want to do is to reduce the number of uninsured in this country simply to increase the number of underinsured. If we can afford $4 trillion in tax cuts, we can afford to create a real drug coverage option in Medicare for retirees and disabled Americans. It is a matter of priorities.

This Congress made a choice between tax cuts for the richest one-half percent of people, the most privileged people in this country, a choice between giving them tax cuts and providing inadequate prescription drug benefits for seniors. Republicans chose the tax cuts for the most privileged. Democrats are choosing a prescription drug benefit for 38 million Medicare beneficiaries.

It is a question of priorities. Let us do the right thing and pass the Democratic substitute.

## THINNING AMERICA'S FOREST LAND

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

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. Speaker, as I stand here today, my home State of Arizona is burning. We have lost now nearly 400,000 acres to fire. That is more than 500 square miles. Colorado is burning as well. We have lost a tremendous amount of forest just this year, and we have got to do something about it.

We should not be surprised at the losses so far to fire. Our forests have been choked with underbrush and excess trees for years now; and whenever we try to go in and thin and manage our forests, we are blocked by radical environmentalists who file lawsuits, who create such uncertainty with the Forest Service that nobody can go in and thin our forests like they should.

One of the groups that is blocking us from going into forests and thinning is a group called Forest Guardians, one of these radical environmental groups. They were interviewed in the East Valley Tribune in Arizona yesterday, and in the paper it says, Forest Guardians oppose using any forest thinning that might benefit commercial logging companies. If one uses the words thinning and/or they use the word forest and commercial in the same sentence, it seems they sue before one can finish the sentence. They simply oppose anything that benefits commercial companies, which means that to go in and thin the forest it is all on the public treasury.

It is estimated that it would cost them $35 billion to go in and thin our forest properly, to prepare them to make sure that we do not have the devastating crown fires that are killing trees and everything, wildlife, whatever stands in their way, but we can cannot do it with the public treasury. We have to allow people to go in, but of course they oppose that.

Going on, it says, and hear what the Forest Guardians are suggesting: Instead, small numbers of small trees should be removed by crews using solar-powered chain saws to ensure the work does not affect air quality in the forest. Solar-powered chain saws. I know my way around a hardware store pretty well, although I have never stumbled into the solar-powered chain saw aisle. It is simply laughable, if it were not so horrifying, that we are being held up by such groups that have such outlandish ideas.

I do not know what is next, trained beavers? Are we supposed to round up the animals of the forest, Mr. Deer and Mr. Bear, and convince them to get a forest council together to help us replant? We need to remind the radical environmentalists that Ferngully was a cartoon.

We have serious problems here in our forests. They demand serious solutions, serious debate, serious answers, and we are getting solar-powered chain saws? We have got to rethink what we are doing.

Our State is burning. Colorado is burning. There are some 3 million acres of Ponderosa pine forest in Arizona. We stand a chance of losing most of that over the next year or two. It is a tinderbox unless we get in, and we cannot afford to wait another 4 or 5 years until we wade through all the lawsuits to allow private interests in to thin forests. We have got to move ahead, and I plead with those serious environmentalists who want to protect habitat for endangered species, who want to have beautiful forest land, to join with us and create a balance as we are getting serious about the issue, instead of throwing up roadblocks and talking about solar-powered chain saws and the like.

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