(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.

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

CORPORATE SCANDALS

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

Mr. DEFAZIO. Mr. Speaker, well, today's headlines, WorldCom Finds Accounting Fraud, $3.8 billion, slight misstatement of their earnings. The stock dropped from $64.50 down to a few pennies, and 17,000 people will lose their jobs, but the former CEO is living happily in his mansion on the millions which he looted, as are many of his cohorts. This is a pattern that is being repeated time and time again. It has gone on for far too long.

It started a year ago today with the energy scandals in the West, little more than a year ago today. We were told by the Republican majority this is market forces at work, you have not built enough plants, has nothing to do with market manipulation. Well, now we got the memo that, in fact, Enron was manipulating the markets, but even with those market manipulations they went bankrupt.

Their former CEO, Mr. Lay, and their former Chief Operating Officer, Mr. Fastow, have between them more than $100 million while employees have lost their pensions and their jobs.

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This seems to be a pattern, does it not? What is the response of the Republican majority? Well, we pretended to adopt pension reform, but we did not prohibit what Enron did to its employees happening at other corporations, and it looks like there is a whole heck of a lot of other corporations out there on the edge while the CEOs are living on the gravy here, and that was sort of the initial response.

Then we had another little scandal coming along here which was American corporations do not think they should pay taxes anymore. Stanley Works wants to move to Bermuda, set up the new Bermuda Triangle, avoid U.S. taxes on its U.S. earnings and its overseas earnings. Bank of America has done the same scam. The corporations are lined up from here to Sunday to do that.

What is the response on that side? Well, the Secretary of the Treasury says our tax laws are too complex, this is a rational response by these unpatriotic corporations who are ripping off the American people, taxpayers and their own employees, and the majority leader on that side says he endorses this practice that they should not pay taxes unlike working wage-earning Americans.

Then we had Global Crossing, the CEO, a couple hundred million bucks there, little accounting scandal; Enron, accounting scandal; Tyco, accounting scandal; now WorldCom. What have we done about the accounting system? Well, we are going to let the market work, the Republicans said. We adopted some securities and accounting reforms here. They say let them police themselves. Of course we get Harvey Pitt, Harvey Pitt appointed by the President of the United States, George Bush, to be headed by the Securities and Exchange Commission. He is a former lawyer for the securities companies that are out defrauding the American people. He is going to be a real lap dog down there. So the response here is status quo, do not upset the boat.

So there seems to be a common trend here which is we are in a meltdown. American CEOs are discredited, American corporations are discredited, the stock market is crashing, hurting average Americans; and the response on that side of the aisle is do not do anything, let market forces work and, by the way, let the CEOs skate. Oh, yes, we did do one really important thing last week. We passed the permanent repeal of estate tax for people who have over $5 million of assets to make sure that Ken Lay, Mr. Fastow, and all these others who have ripped off tens of millions of dollars from their employees will never pay any taxes on the money they stole. God forbid they should, because they are all major contributors.

Last week the Republicans held the largest fundraiser in the history of Washington, D.C., headlined by the wonderful pharmaceutical companies, but followed up by many of the other players whom I have mentioned here because their CEOs happen to be awash in cash, and they want to make sure they do not go to jail. So they are becoming more and more generous in their contributing.

This is the most outrageous scandal in the history of the United States. The largest restatement of earnings by a corporation, tens of thousands of employees losing their pensions, their jobs, millions of Americans losing their 401(k)s, their pensions; and the response on the Republican side of the aisle is nothing, because they are frozen in place by the fact that they are taking so much money from the people who have perpetrated these frauds. I hope that the American people demand and vote for some change next fall.

REACTION TO U.S. 9TH DISTRICT COURT DECISION CONCERNING THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KERNS). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. JEFF MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JEFF MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, look what the courts have done now. Just when we think life after September 11 had gained some sense of normalcy, just after patriotism at a level not seen since World War II had permeated every segment of our society, a society under God, two liberal judges in San Francisco have told this Nation at war that our Pledge of Allegiance is unconstitutional. Personally, Mr. Speaker, I am sickened. The Pledge is not a prayer. It is a declaration of being an American. It is the embodiment of everything we hold dear, the flag, the Republic, and one Nation under God.

I guess in a country where our constitutional safeguards have been taken to the extreme and have had to have nativity scenes removed from town squares and even silent prayers removed from high school football games, I should not be surprised. I suspect it is only a matter of time or a matter of finding the right lawyer who is seeking to make a name for himself to proclaim that the U.S. flag is unconstitutional and that by flying the flag someone may be offended by its semblance. We are forced to say happy holidays instead of Merry Christmas. We are forced to say gesundheit rather than God bless you. If a school teacher mentions Jesus during a lesson on history, that teacher faces disciplinary action.

Mr. Speaker, it is time we put our foot down as a body, a representative body of this country and respond to this outrageous decision and proclaim that these United States are united against terrorism, united against this decision, and united under God.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS UNDER MEDICARE

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

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, last week the Committee on Energy and Commerce spent 3 long days and one very long night marking up a piece of legislation that is supposed to provide seniors with a Medicare prescription drug benefit. I say ''supposed to'' because most Americans support putting prescription drugs under Medicare. I have a graph here that shows those who support or oppose rolling back the tax cut that Congress passed last year and using that money to provide a prescription drug benefit under Medicare for seniors. Supporting is 64 percent, opposing is 25 percent, and 6 percent do not think Medicare ought to have prescription drugs. This poll was done between March 28 and May 1 of this year.

So instead of having the huge tax cut that we passed last year before September 11 and extending them even after 9 years from now, the American people really want a prescription drug benefit for seniors before they want a tax cut.

What is frustrating is that if we had been able to pass even one single Democratic amendment during that markup, I think all those days and that night would have been well spent. Unfortunately, every effort we made to improve the bill, and there was so much to improve, was shot down on basically party line votes.