

have introduced. Still other opportunities might be an amendment to another bill.

The reason I take the floor at this moment is in this morning's Congressional Quarterly, it says:

It appears increasingly unlikely that the Senate will vote this year on legislation that would allow Americans to import prescription drugs from abroad, despite wide public support for the idea.

An aide to [Senate] Majority Leader Bill Frist . . . said Tuesday that consensus on permitting the practice remained elusive and that the issue could get swamped by more pressing issues leading up to Election Day.

That was from the majority leader's aide.

Senator GRASSLEY was quoted as saying that Senator FRIST, the majority leader, "is intentionally keeping drug reimportation off the Senate floor because it would pass by a wide margin." That is a direct quote from Senator GRASSLEY.

I have spoken at great length with Senator FRIST about this issue. I know others have different views and they have their own interests. But I believe there has been a commitment for us to at least try to have votes on reimportation. Some of us feel very strongly about it. It is not partisan because we have Republicans and Democrats who have joined on a bipartisan piece of legislation.

It is my hope that in the coming days we will find a way either to take the bill that is at the Senate desk, which is a bipartisan House-passed bill allowing for the reimportation of prescription drugs, or alternatively to have an opportunity to vote on the bipartisan legislation we have developed here in the Senate.

I have said many times, my own view is that the pharmaceutical industry is a big industry. They do a lot of good. They produce lifesaving medicines. But miracle medicines offer no miracles to those who can't afford them. It is unfair that we pay the highest prices in the world for prescription drugs.

I believe one way to begin putting downward pressure on prices is to let the market system work. The market system would do for our country just as it does in Europe where they have something called parallel trading. Parallel trading means that for approved prescription drugs, if you are in Germany and want to buy a prescription drug from Spain, that is not a problem, you can do that. If you are in France and want to buy a prescription drug from Italy, that is not a problem. The parallel trading plan works in Europe, works for the safety of the European consumer.

Why should the American consumer not be able to purchase or why shouldn't pharmacists from our country not be able to purchase an FDA-approved drug from a licensed pharmacist in Canada? That is the absurdity of all this. A pharmacist from Grand Forks, ND, cannot go to that one-room pharmacy in Emerson, Canada, a licensed pharmacy in Emerson, and purchase

that Lipitor at a savings and pass the savings along to the American consumer.

We want to change the law to allow that to happen so that pharmacists and licensed distributors can access FDA-approved drugs that are sold in every other country in the world at a lower price and bring them back and allow the savings to be passed along to the American consumer. Ultimately, what it will mean is a repricing of those drugs in our country. The market system will force a repricing and a lowering of prescription drugs prices. That is the goal, and that is what the result would be if the market system is allowed to work.

Again, we are only talking about FDA-approved drugs. We are not talking about anything other than FDA-approved drugs that were produced in FDA-inspected plants, sold by a licensed distributor and pharmacist in Canada and/or the United States.

That is the issue. I came to the Senate floor only because I saw the statement this morning by Senator FRIST's staff suggesting that maybe this won't get done. Again, I refer the majority leader to March 11, the statement in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD in which the majority leader said: The Senate will begin a process for developing proposals that would allow for the safe reimportation of FDA-approved drugs, not "maybe" but that would allow for the reimportation. The fact is, I feel there is a commitment here, and my hope is that commitment will be kept in the coming couple of weeks as we work to finish our work in this Congress.

We have a lot to do. There is a lot of politics running around this Chamber. My hope is that on big issues and important issues, we can decide we want to do the right thing and engage on issues that are important to this country and important to the American people.

I yield the floor.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2005

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to the consideration of H.R. 4567, which the clerk will report.

The journal clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4567) making appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2005, and for other purposes.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Mississippi.

Mr. COCHRAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the following Appropriations Committee staff mem-

bers and detailees be granted the privilege of the floor during the consideration of the fiscal year 2005 Homeland Security appropriations bill and any votes that may occur in relation thereto: Less Spivey, Carol Cribbs, Kimberly Nelson, James Hayes, Avery Forbes, Brian Glackin, Chip Walgren, Scott Nance, Alexa Sewell, Peter Edge, and Sean MacKenzie.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. MURKOWSKI). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COCHRAN. Madam President, we are now on the Homeland Security appropriations bill for the next fiscal year, 2005.

For the information of Senators, this morning the President signed the supplemental appropriations bill the Senate passed last night. The President had requested a supplemental for the Disaster Relief Fund of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Because of the pressure on that fund, the Agency would have run out of money this morning if the Congress had not acted in response to the President's request on yesterday.

The House acted and the Senate approved the supplemental appropriations bill for the Department. So I am happy to make that report to the Senate. There was some discussion of that issue last night, and I appreciate the cooperation and the support of the Senate in taking the action we did.

We are now prepared to consider the full year appropriations bill for the Department of Homeland Security.

We have some opening statements we will make. Senator BYRD is the senior Democratic member of this subcommittee, as well as the full committee of the Appropriations Committee. He has a statement he wishes to make.

After opening statements are made, we will be happy to consider any amendments Senators wish to offer. We hope to be able to complete action on this bill as soon as reasonably possible. By the end of the week would be great, if we could accomplish that. But if not, I think we will have the support of the leader and the chairman of the full committee to continue to work on this bill until we do finish it.

It is a matter of great importance that these agencies and this Department know what the funding levels are going to be for the fiscal year that begins very soon, October 1. We certainly need to take action in a timely way for orderly planning for the use of those funds that are appropriated by the Congress for this important work.

Protecting our homeland is a very important—there is no more important action by the Federal Government, in my opinion. So I hope we can consider this bill with a sense of serious deliberation and work hard to complete action in a timely fashion.

I appreciate very much the cooperation of Senators who are letting us know about suggestions they have for changes in our bill as reported by the