

exploit America's gun laws to obtain the weapons they intend to use to kill Americans.

Next, the United States had a proven and effective law on the books that made it difficult to purchase these deadly weapons, and this law needed to be renewed.

Finally, President Bush, who claims to be a huge homeland security supporter, stayed silent. Why did he remain silent? Why did the President not act? I believe the answer is really pretty simple.

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The National Rifle Association, the NRA, refused to support President Bush's reelection bid until after the renewal date for the assault weapons ban came and went, that was today, came and went untouched by the White House. This President has been cowed by the NRA. The sad irony is that last week Vice President DICK CHENEY made the outrageous claim that it is absolutely essential on November 2 that Americans make the right choice because if we make the wrong choice, then the danger is that we will get hit again. I quote that from the Vice President's remarks.

This misleading connection in addition to insulting the intelligence of the American people wrongly asserts that a vote for JOHN KERRY and JOHN EDWARDS is a vote for terrorism. Instead, al Qaeda will be poised to hit us again because in large part on September 13, 2004, today, the Republican leadership has allowed Islamic militants and others to once again purchase American machine guns, all for the reelection of the President. How very, very shameful that is. If we truly want to secure our homeland, we need to pursue policies that are smarter than those that would decriminalize deadly weapons to elect someone to office. By the way, virtually every major law enforcement organization in the United States of America supports extending the ban.

That is why I have introduced a new SMART security platform for the 21st century. H. Con. Res. 392 is legislation to create a sensible, multilateral, American response to terrorism. SMART security is stronger on national security than President Bush claims to be. SMART security will stop the sale of weapons to oppressive regimes and regimes involved in human rights abuses. SMART security will pursue enhanced inspection regimes and regional security arrangements to ensure that state sponsors of terrorism do not get ahold of more light weaponry, or even deadlier chemical or biological weapons.

Let us talk for a moment about presidential flip-flops. When it comes to keeping assault weapons out of the hands of terrorists, George Bush speaks out of both sides of his mouth.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KLINE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana

(Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

#### FACTS SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES ON MEDICARE REFORM

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 President spent some time recently taking, and I concede this, well-deserved credit for last year's Medicare bill, for foisting last year's 678-page, \$534 billion Medicare law on seniors and the rest of the American public. The fact that he is proud of this law, a law that hands HMOs \$12 billion in bonus payments, HMO insurance companies get \$12 billion in bonus payments while raising seniors' premiums by 17 percent, a record amount, raises a larger issue: How have seniors fared under the last 3½ years of the Bush administration? It is not a difficult question to answer. The facts speak for themselves.

We remember several months ago the President actively lobbied for the Medicare overhaul that would treat seniors without drug coverage like second-class citizens, forcing them out of traditional Medicare and into private insurance company HMOs.

Members will remember that vote. It took place in the middle of the night. It was a 3-hour vote, the longest in congressional history. There was more campaign payoff money on that vote from insurance companies and drug companies to Republican Members of the Congress. We all remember that. The President put his weight behind that new Medicare law that lines the pockets of HMOs to the tune of \$12 billion, that lines the pockets of drug companies to the tune of \$182 billion, and explicitly blocks seniors from access to competitively priced prescription drugs. The insurance companies, as I said, got a payment of \$12 billion. The drug companies' profits went up \$182 billion and Republican leadership and the President did very well in this campaign year with contributions from the drug companies and the insurance companies. They could certainly afford it after legislation that will create and bring to them those huge profits.

After that, the President spends millions of dollars of our money, of taxpayer money, of dollars that could have gone to a prescription drug plan, could have gone to seniors to reduce the cost of seniors' drugs, but the President spends millions of dollars of our money on ads touting the new Medicare bill with the slogan "same Medicare, better benefits," even though the President and his advisers knew his handiwork would be directly responsible for the largest premium increase in Medicare history, 17 percent,

the largest premium increase in Medicare's 38-year history, not to mention deductibles that will for the first time that seniors have to pay increase year after year after year.

Do not believe anyone that tells you the Bush administration is not responsible, in spite of the ads the President is running, is not responsible for the 17 percent premium increase just because he says premiums are calculated by a formula. Yes, they are calculated by a formula written in the bill that the drug and insurance companies wrote that the President pushed through. That is like pouring gasoline on a campfire, then blaming someone else when the forest burns down.

The President's Medicare law, inflated by a \$12 billion HMO slush fund and an outright prohibition on bulk rate prices, bringing the price down, swelled the overall cost of Medicare which in turn increased the premium that seniors pay. America's seniors know it. You and I know it. Everyone in this Chamber knows that is why premiums went up, because of the deal the President made with the drug companies and the insurance companies.

In his budget proposal this year, the President recommends cutting \$60 billion from the Medicaid program, \$60 billion, even though Medicaid covers 70 percent of the nursing home care provided in this country. Without Medicaid, two-thirds of America's seniors in nursing homes would have to find some other source of care. For many of those seniors, there is no other source of care. For others, families have to patch together the care any way they can, even if it means they become impoverished.

Medicaid provides health care, nursing home care and home health care to nearly 5 million seniors living below the poverty line, 149,000 people in my State of Ohio alone. The recession and massive job losses have left States struggling to finance their full financial obligations to Medicaid. If the Federal Government does not do its part, the Medicaid program is in jeopardy. The Bush administration is simply not doing its part because of its budget cuts to Medicaid and because of the tax cuts which have gone overwhelmingly to the 1 percent wealthiest Americans.

The President's hand-picked Social Security Commission came up with a privatized plan to drain \$1.8 trillion from the Social Security Trust Fund over the next 5 years. Privatizing Social Security, privatizing Medicare, cutting Medicaid is no benefit to seniors. It is the wrong direction for our country.

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

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