

is their version of a free market. Of course, again, they are generous campaign contributors so we can understand some of this rhetoric on their side of the aisle.

Nonetheless, an incredibly expensive, confusing plan which gives all of the benefit to the pharmaceutical and insurance industry, puts seniors at risk, puts taxpayers at risk, and we could have done so much better for so much less. It would cost nothing to negotiate those lower prices. The VA gets prices at a 70, 75 percent reduction from list price; but, no, the Republicans had a special provision in this bill.

Medicare, the default provider for anybody who cannot buy into an insurance plan that is red-lined by the insurance industry, and they can do that legally under this bill, they say, oh, we are not selling you a premium; you have got too many drug claims; we are not going to take you. But they can go to Medicare as a default provider, and guess what? Medicare is the only entity in the world, other than uninsured individuals, who will have to pay list price for drugs. Nobody can afford list price for drugs except the superwealthy and, according to Republicans, Medicare. This will bankrupt the program, but that is where the highest risk seniors, the ones that are not desirable to the industry, will get pushed after maybe 1 year of enrollment, if they are lucky enough to get enrolled in the first year.

So huge costs to taxpayers, confusion and risks for seniors, the end of Medicare in the not-too-distant future by bankruptcy, by design, by the Republicans, all to profit the private insurance industry and the pharmaceutical industry.

You should be really, really ashamed of this horrible product.

#### NATURAL GAS CRISIS

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

Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to speak about an issue I have spoken about many times: the natural gas crisis that faces this country.

Yes, we just passed an energy bill, but it did little to help our homeowners heat their homes. We have had a 500 percent increase in natural gas prices in the last 5 years. A month ago, when we were still facing the impact of Katrina, we had a 700 percent gas increase when it reached \$14.50 when it had been \$2 just 5 years ago.

These natural gas prices, in my view, threaten homeownership, church ownership, schools, YMCAs, YWCAs, and small businesses.

In my districts, those kinds of organizations are renewing their gas contracts, and they are paying 100 percent more than they paid last year and many times more than they paid a couple of years ago.

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Industries like the fertilizer industry are being crushed by these natural gas prices because 70 percent of the cost of producing fertilizer is natural gas. Forty-four percent of our fertilizer companies are now offshore, and our farmers are paying two and three and four times as much for fertilizer as they did just several years ago.

The huge petrochemical industry that is dominated by America will not be for long because there are 20 chemical plants being built in the world and 19 are offshore. Why? Natural gas prices. Petrochemicals use gas not only as a fuel, but they use it as an ingredient for all the chemicals we buy every day. Polymers and plastics involved in everything we market today use natural gas as an ingredient and natural gas as a fuel. Forty to fifty percent of their costs are natural gas.

We have huge reserves in this country of natural gas. We are not poor on natural gas. Congress and Presidents have chosen to lock it up. Our Outer Continental Shelf, that is the first 200 miles offshore, is rich in natural gas.

We have a bill that we introduced today that will open up the Outer Continental Shelf. We increase States' rights from three miles to 20 miles so it will be all out of sight. There has never been a gas production well that has ever in any way soiled a beach. We need to unlock our natural gas supplies.

Canada, Belgium, Great Britain, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, New Zealand, and Australia produce most of their natural gas offshore, right off of their coastlines. They have beautiful beaches. They are not a threat. There has never been a gas production well that has ever in any way caused beach problems.

I urge Members of this body to deal with this natural gas crisis. We have to open up some supply or we are going to lose major industries. A million or more jobs will be gone in the next 2 or 3 years, some of the best blue collar jobs we have left in this country.

We cannot just subsidize people with natural gas prices. We need to bring prices down by increasing supply because we have lots of it. We have lots of it in the Midwest. But on the Outer Continental Shelf on our coastlines, it is right close to our population centers, it is right close to our plants and our manufacturers.

We will not make steel in this country in the years ahead if we continue. We will not make aluminum in this country. We will not produce anything that uses natural gas to melt it, to bend it, to twist it, to treat it because we cannot afford it. Europe pays half as much for natural gas as we do. China, Taiwan, and Japan are big competitors economically and pay a third of what we pay for natural gas. The rest of the world pays less than \$2.

It is time to get our heads out of the sand. It is time to open up our natural gas reserves in this country and pass

House bill 4318, which would open up huge reserves on our shorelines to produce natural gas in this country so we can compete and have jobs for our working people.

#### PAYING TRIBUTE TO ED ROYBAL

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. POE). Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. PELOSI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to join my colleagues in paying tribute to our former colleague and friend, Congressman Ed Roybal.

Many people who are in Congress now did not have the privilege of serving with him. They serve with his very distinguished daughter, Congresswoman LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD, but the legacy lives on. I wish everyone in this Congress could have seen the outpouring of love and support and devotion to Ed Roybal at his magnificent funeral at the Catholic Cathedral in Los Angeles. We know how respected Ed Roybal is in this body. It was wonderful to see the love of the people he was closest to in California. Many of us went there, and we told his many friends and his family and those close to him of the respect in which he was held here.

Mr. Speaker, I knew Ed Roybal very well for many years. I was a big fan of his when he was doing work with the farm workers organizing in California. He was a legend in our State. And then he continued his leadership for our country in the Congress of the United States.

When I was first named to the Appropriations Committee, Ed Roybal was my chairman. We were in the majority at the time. He was my chairman on the Treasury Postal Subcommittee. So, on a daily basis, I saw firsthand his command of the policy, of the issues, the power of his advocacy and his determination to help all Americans.

Ed Roybal had no time for government of the few. He was about the many. When others in Washington turned their backs on seniors, the disadvantaged, and the poor, Ed Roybal was there. He was the first Member of Congress to appropriate funds for HIV/AIDS, and that sounds very remarkable and commendable now. It was very courageous at the time. He then was a leader. He fought the good fight with courage. He had a special grace about him and a dignity and a twinkle in his eye.

In recognition of his leadership on public health, the Campus of the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta was named in his honor. Ed Roybal probably has more buildings in California named for him than any other politician ever in California. But at the CDC,

at the Centers for Disease Control, they named an entire campus for him, if that gives Members any idea of the respect and the gratitude that they felt for Ed Roybal.

Fiercely proud of his Hispanic roots and deeply patriotic, the two went hand in hand. Ed Roybal loved America. He helped found the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Caucus's Institute and embarked on a mission to provide scholarships to needy Latino children and expand opportunities for all Americans.

Through his work as founder emeritus of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials, he contributed to the advancement of Latino political power first in Southern California and then in the Nation. Hundreds of Latino elected officials have since followed in his footsteps, all knowing that they stand on his shoulders. By his courage and his determination to open the doors to minorities, Latinos have become much more active in politics and all facets of American society. Indeed, in our State of California, we are now a minority majority State, so we see regularly and firsthand the magnificent contribution of the Latino community to our great country, and Ed Roybal was very much a part of facilitating all of that.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, Eddie Roybal loved his country and he loved his family, speaking with pride of them every day that he served here. Tonight we bring the deepest sympathy of this Congress in which he led and served and indeed the sympathy of our entire country to the family he loved, he adored. I hope it is a comfort to Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD's beautiful mother, Lucille, her name is Lucille as well, and his three children, our colleague Lucille, her sister Lillian and Ed, Jr., that so many people mourn their loss and are praying for them at this sad time.

With the life and leadership of Ed Roybal, God truly blessed America.

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

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

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mrs. MCCARTHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

#### MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT IS A FAILURE

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

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

Mr. EMANUEL. Mr. Speaker, today marks the first day seniors can enroll in the new Medicare prescription drug benefit.

When the Medicare drug bill passed this House more than 2 years ago, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle touted it as the greatest health care achievement since Medicare's inception. Today, we have a different reality.

The Medicare drug benefit is an absolute failure. The way this thing is designed, one would think that Brownie from FEMA had something to do with it. It is a failure because of its complexity and inability to provide seniors with access to affordable drugs.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle have said this benefit would help 42 million Americans who are served by Medicare. But the only people who are really benefiting from this benefit are the pharmaceutical companies who gave \$132 million over 10 years and have walked away with \$139 billion in additional profits from this bill. Insurers who gave well over \$100 million to the Republican Party are awarded with over \$130 billion in additional profits, all paid for by the taxpayers.

This bill was never designed with the customer in mind. This legislation was designed with the pharmaceutical companies and the HMOs and the insurance companies in mind. They could never have designed something this complex if they were thinking of people who were 65 years and older whose 60 cents out of every dollar for their health care goes to prescription drugs. They could never have thought of that when they designed this legislation and this bill.

Aside from the horrible corporate welfare, the complexity is a real shame here. But what is ironic is on this floor where we debated this, all the Republicans talked to us about how this choice was going to be a real win for the seniors. The gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. ENGLISH) said, "We are simply saying let us offer choices to seniors." The gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) said, "To qualify for Medicare, you qualify for this program, and you are going to have choice." The gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CAMP) said, "This Medicare bill offers a prescription drug benefit through competing private health insurance plans, marking the first time the private sector plans and consumer choice would be the principal vehicle for delivering Medicare benefits."

But it is all this choice that is causing the problem. Sometimes simplicity is better than choice, like Part A and Part B in the Medicare plan. Through all this choice, the only thing they have done is confuse seniors and driven up the profits for the pharmaceutical companies and the HMOs. There is no choice here. Mass confusion is what is going on.

The benefit is so complicated and confusing that even beneficiaries who are PhDs say they cannot figure it out. A recent Kaiser Family Foundation poll found that more than six in ten seniors either barely understand the benefit or do not understand it at all.

But just as important are the choices that the Republican Congress did not make. What did they not do? They did not do anything about the price of these drugs. They could have done something with direct negotiations just like Wal-Mart, just like Target, just like private sector companies, just like VA, the Veterans Administration does: negotiate, pool the resources, purchase bulk, just like every company in the private sector does. They refused to allow Medicare to do that. So we in America now are paying top premium dollar for drug and pharmaceutical prices and products that we could negotiate and get better pricing for. Why do we do that? Because of the pharmaceutical companies. And who is left holding the bag? The taxpayers and seniors.

What else does this legislation refuse to do? It does not allow us to actually access products in Canada and Europe and allow competition to bring prices down. For a party dedicated to the principles of a free market, it is not understandable why they decided to choose a closed market, forcing America to pay the highest prices of any country in the world. Again, negotiation or allowing people access to the prices of drugs in Canada and Europe, we could have brought prices down; and, third, they could have allowed generics to get to the market faster. Three market ways: competition, open markets, negotiations. They could have brought the prices down and had a simpler plan, but there is nobody paying the piper for those ideas, and that is why the pharmaceutical companies are walking off with corporate welfare to the tune of \$139 billion in additional profits, all paid for by the taxpayers, all brought to us by a Republican Congress.

The final bill that created the drug benefit left seniors with a limited benefit that failed to reduce the cost of prescription drugs, gave them serious choices that have led to complexity.

Now it is possible that seniors would understand the drug benefit a little better if this administration had distributed information to beneficiaries that was actually correct. But they botched that, too. The administration's own "Medicare & You" handbook included inaccurate information. Once the errors were discovered, CMS directed seniors to Medicare's Web site, even though over 75 percent of seniors have never used the Internet.

Mr. Speaker, the Medicare prescription drug benefit is an absolute failure. It is a failure because it was never designed with the customer in mind.