

A REPUBLICAN PRESCRIPTION DRUG PROGRAM BUILT ON FALSE HOPES AND VAGUE PROMISES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, not long ago this House debated a prescription drug coverage bill, not a Medicare prescription drug coverage proposal but a bill endorsed by the Republican majority that features private stand-alone prescription drug coverage for seniors. It was the only bill we were permitted to consider.

I joined many other Members of this House when I questioned the logic of this proposal, the feasibility of this proposal, the arrogant anti-Medicare message of this proposal.

Our concerns are not theoretical. It turns out that Nevada has adopted a prescription drug program almost identical to the Republican plan. It is not working. It is not working for the same reason the Republican plan will not work, because insurers refuse to participate. They say the risks and the costs of providing individual insurance policies for prescription drugs are simply too high. We do not actually have to implement the national proposal to see whether insurers will participate. They have already said they will not.

This House raised the hopes of millions of seniors by passing prescription drug legislation, legislation that was forced upon this body by a majority unwilling to consider any other plan, any other bill, any other approach. Republican leadership forced this House to take seriously a proposal built on false hopes and vague promises.

The majority in this House saw a political opportunity and seized it. They decided it was time to associate themselves with the prescription drug issue. After all, Medicare beneficiaries and their families are a huge voting block, and the majority is up for grabs.

To my Republican colleagues, more power to them. If the media plays their bill right, maybe they will hold onto a few more seats, except for one thing. This is not a token issue. When Members play the prescription drug issue like a game, they are playing with the lives of real people. They are playing with the quality of those lives and the length of those lives.

To the 84-year-old woman eating 1 meal a day so she can afford the arthritis medication that permits her to walk, this is not a game. To the 67-year-old man who cannot afford to fill a blood pressure prescription that could keep him alive, this is not a game. To the adult sons and daughters wondering whether they are going to be able to find money for their parents' prescriptions, this is not a game.

Last week was the 35th anniversary of the Medicare program. The American public has financed that program and benefited from that program for 35

years. Various private insurance companies have come and gone. Private health plans have evolved from true insurance programs, where everyone paid the same rate and everyone was eligible for coverage, to selective organizations favoring the healthiest enrollees.

Medicare does not play favorites. It provides reliable coverage to all seniors. The original Medicare program is available to everyone. It never skips town. It never ratchets down benefits. It does not charge different premiums to different people based on different circumstances. It enables seniors to see the provider of their choice. No wonder it is the most popular political program, public program, in the Nation's history.

But to keep up with modern health care, the Medicare benefits package needs to be modified to include prescription drugs. Updating the Medicare benefits package, that is what the debate some weeks ago should have been about. It was an insult to the public, that instead we debated a bill that makes no sense unless the goal is not to provide a prescription drug benefit plan, but rather, to set the stage for a massive overhaul of Medicare; unless the goal is to promote privatization of Medicare. After all, if we privatize one benefit, like prescription drugs, we might as well privatize them all.

I urge my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to change course. I urge them to shift their support towards legislation that updates Medicaid and Medicare instead of spurning it. If we work together on a proposal like that, we can do the right thing for the American people. But if my Republican colleagues continually insist on going down this dead end street, they should not be surprised if come November it is the American voter who says, game over.

WILLIAM R. MOTE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GOSS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. GOSS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to say a few words about William Russell Mote. Mr. Mote passed away a few days ago after a long and productive life, as Members heard my colleague, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER), announce from this podium a few minutes ago.

I suppose not every American may know the Mote name, but surely they have been affected by his life and his generosity. William Mote contributed measurably to our understanding of the oceans and the fishes and other life in the oceans, helping us to learn how to be good stewards, taking care of these natural resources.

Mr. Mote's accomplishments are very many, but I think his most notable one from my perspective was the establishment and the sustainment, the very generous sustainment, of the world-

recognized Mote Marine Research Laboratory in Sarasota, Florida.

Prior to redistricting in 1990 in Florida, I used to represent Sarasota and the Mote Marine Lab where it is. I can tell Members that today it is one of the premier marine laboratories in the world, an opinion that is quickly seconded by experts in this field, I would add.

Mote Marine is a very busy, very professional, and very accomplished institution, just like its founder. While Mr. Mote has passed on, all of us are going to continue to benefit enormously from his life and the Mote Marine Laboratory, which continues on. We are in his debt for that.

I would like to pass along to the many members of the Mote Marine laboratory community and their families my sincere condolences from myself and my wife, Mariel, and of course from other friends from southwest Florida which I now represent who understand the Mote Marine Laboratory and knew Mr. Mote well.

We appreciate greatly the legacy that he leaves us of awareness about the oceans and how fragile they are, and that the fishes and the critters and mammals in that ocean do need stewardship, now that mankind has made such a strong imprint on our globe; the educational efforts that are being made at Mote Marine to share knowledge with people who need that knowledge and want that knowledge to push forward into the horizons of the unknown in our oceans; and of course, the research that is done there in so many areas.

I have memories myself going back when I was a city councilman in the city of Sanibel trying to deal with the scourge of red tide, which is something that occasionally visits the Florida beaches. It is a very unpleasant thing, with dead fish and a bad smell, and it is bad for tourism, but it obviously says that something is wrong with the environment. We tried to understand that.

That was my first meeting with Mr. Mote, going to his laboratory and saying, can you help me understand red tide? Is there something we can do about that? That pursuit still goes on. That was back some 20 or 25 years ago, I think.

Bill Mote was a hands-on activist. He got very enthusiastically involved. He had a wonderful, charming way about going into a project. He was very pleasant. He was very knowledgeable. He was very eager to share whatever knowledge he had and pass it along.

He certainly raised awareness about sharks. I think most of us are familiar with the movie, but the facts about sharks, what they really are, how they live, what goes on with shark populations in the world, we owe a huge debt to the Mote Marine laboratory and the work that has been done there.

Dolphins, I remember going to Mote Marine to get assistance in writing legislation for dolphin protection. There