

From this gentleman's perspective, it was a pleasure to work with General Gordon while he wore the uniform of the United States Air Force. I am sure he will bring the same diligence and professionalism and integrity to his first civilian job as the Under Secretary of Energy for Nuclear Security and the first administrator for the National Nuclear Security Administration. As we all know, our nuclear secrets and weapons abilities will be more secure, and needs to be more secure in places like Los Alamos, with John Gordon as their steward. We look forward to his taking up the reins.

On behalf of the members of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, I would like to thank General John Gordon for his continuing service to our Nation. I wish John and his wife, Marilyn, and their daughter, Jennifer, all the best for their future. I offer sincere gratitude for the family sacrifices I know have been made to allow General Gordon to commit so much time and energy to distinguish himself in critical 7-day-a-week, 24-hour-a-day top-level jobs that he has done so well. That is a great contribution to our country. It deserves to be recognized.

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#### PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE FOR SENIORS TOP PRIORITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Ms. STABENOW) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. STABENOW. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and have an opportunity to speak about an issue that I have come to the floor very frequently to speak about for many, many months now.

I am asking my colleagues to make sure that we place prescription drug coverage for seniors under Medicare as a top priority for us before we leave session this year. Time is running out.

We have the best economy in a generation. We have budget surpluses that we are deciding how to use and how to invest. I cannot think of a more important issue than investing in the future health and well-being of older Americans and families all across the United States.

I have been coming to the floor of the House on a regular basis to speak out and to share stories of constituents of mine, family members, older Americans who have been calling me and writing me.

I set up a hotline back in August of last year and have set up something called the Prescription Drug Fairness Campaign, whereby I have been asking people to share with me their stories, what is really happening in their lives as it relates to the issue of their medications and the high costs of prescription drugs. I have been overwhelmed with the letters and the phone calls that we have received.

I want one more time to be reading a letter this evening on the floor of this

House from one of my constituents in Michigan. This is a letter from Mr. James Schlieger from Flint, Michigan. He writes to me: "My wife Joan has Alzheimer's Disease. In 1999, my out-of-pocket payment for preparations was \$3,020.43. Our other medical expenses were \$3,909.79. Our Social Security income is \$20,252. This leaves us little over \$13,000 to pay our property taxes, utility bills, food, and gasoline and all of our other expenses. Bottom line, there is nothing left to enjoy the Golden Years. With my wife's condition, in a few years, we will have depleted our savings, then we will have to become dependent on government care. Please help us. James Schlieger from Flint, Michigan."

I think we need to help Mr. Schlieger. We need to make sure that our seniors are not using all of their savings to pay for the cost of the health care that they are supposed to be receiving under Medicare.

This Sunday is the 35th anniversary of the day that the Medicare legislation was signed. At the time it was set up, it covered the way health care was provided. The promise was there that, once an American reached the age of 65 or was disabled, they knew that there would be health care available to them.

The difficulties that we have now is that health care has changed. The way we treat people has changed. Instead of it being in the hospital and with operations and inpatient prescription drugs, we are now in a situation where the majority of care is outpatient, is home health care. It almost always involves prescription drugs. So Medicare simply needs to be modernized to cover the way health care is provided today.

There are others who are talking about privatizing. There are others talking about other kinds of approaches. I would urge my colleagues to simply look at a system that the seniors of our country know and trust. It has worked. It just needs to be updated. If we cannot do that now with the best economy in a generation, with budget surpluses and the ability to take a small percentage and invest that back into Medicare to lower the cost of prescription drugs, I do not believe we ever will.

So I call on my colleagues one more time. Let us not let one more senior sit down at breakfast in the morning and decide, do I eat today or do I pay for my medications? That is a choice that older Americans should not have to make.

I am going to do everything in my power to fight on behalf of the seniors of Michigan, to make sure that we modernize Medicare for prescription drugs.

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#### WHALE KILLING ENDS FOR MAKAH INDIAN TRIBE

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

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, the Makah Indian Tribe in Washington State has been granted special permission by the Clinton-Gore administration to kill four gray whales each year. They have already killed one whale and injured at least one. By the way, for every whale killed, there is an average of two that are injured and get away.

But last year, I filed an appeal along with several co-plaintiffs to overturn the decision made by the U.S. District Court to allow whaling by the Makah Indian Tribe. Two months ago, a three-judge panel from the 9th Circuit Court handed down a decision in that case. The decision specifically confirmed my position. We won. Whale killing was ended. The only way the Clinton-Gore administration would be able to gain approval for this whale hunt now would be to blatantly violate the Federal environmental protections law.

In fact, the court specifically asked, and I quote from the decision language, "Can the Federal Defendants now be trusted to take the clear-eyed hard look at the whaling proposal's consequences required by law, or will a new (Environmental Assessment) be a classic Wonderland case of first-the-verdict, then-the-trial?"

Alice in Wonderland, indeed. However, in this story, the heads that are being chopped off belong to the majestic gray whales that ply the western coast of America and each year travel north to the Bering Sea and occasionally even to Siberia. Most Americans believe that we have risen above the wanton slaughter of the buffalo for their hides, or the whales for the value of their body parts.

This would have been the first step toward returning to the terrible commercial exploitation of whales of the 19th century. In the papers filed with NOAA by the Makah Tribe, the tribe refused to deny that this was a move toward renewal of commercial whaling.

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It is important to understand that the International Whaling Commission has never sanctioned the Makah whale hunt. Under the International Whaling Convention, of which the United States is a signatory, it has been legal to hunt whales for scientific or aboriginal subsistence purposes only. The tribe clearly has no nutritional need nor subsistence need to kill the whales.

Even in the face of the strong International Whaling Commission's opposition to the original Makah proposal in 1997, the U.S. delegation unbelievably ignored years of U.S. opposition to whale killing and cut a sleazy deal with the Russian government in a back-door effort to find a way to grant the Makah's the right to kill whales.

The agreement was to allow the Makah Tribe to kill four of the whales from the Russian quota each year under the artificial construction of cultural subsistence. Before this shameful back-door deal, the United States had led the opposition worldwide to any