

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 3389, NATIONAL SEA GRANT COLLEGE PROGRAM ACT AMENDMENTS OF 2002

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 107-514) on the resolution (H. Res. 446) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 3389) to reauthorize the National Sea Grant College Program Act, and for other purposes, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

REPORT ON RESOLUTION PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 1979, SMALL AIRPORT SAFETY, SECURITY, AND AIR SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2002

Ms. PRYCE of Ohio, from the Committee on Rules, submitted a privileged report (Rept. No. 107-515) on the resolution (H. Res. 447) providing for consideration of the bill (H.R. 1979) to amend title 49, United States Code, to provide assistance for the construction of certain air traffic control towers, which was referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. KENNEDY of Minnesota). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. FLETCHER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, as we speak tonight, there is a committee marking up the prescription drug bill which will provide prescription drug coverage for all seniors in this country. I believe it is one of the most pressing issues in health care that we face today, and so I am glad that we are going to spend this next hour talking about the House prescription drug plan; and I thank the gentleman from Louisiana (Chairman TAUZIN), and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS), the chairman of the subcommittee, for their leadership in bringing this bill to the floor and making sure that we have a plan that is reasonable, doable, and will provide immediate relief for seniors.

I am accompanied by some of my colleagues today, and at this time I yield to the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. WHITFIELD). I know this has been an important issue that the gentleman has worked on.

Mr. WHITFIELD. Mr. Speaker, prescription drugs for seniors on Medicare, this is an issue which has been before the Congress for quite some time. There has been a discussion about it for a number of years. If Members will recall, last year for the first time the House of Representatives under our leadership did pass a meaningful prescription drug benefit for senior citi-

zens throughout the country. We all know how difficult it is for some of these seniors to pay for the prescription drugs that they have been prescribed for their particular condition.

One of the disappointing things about last year was that although the House passed a meaningful prescription drug benefit, the Senate did not pass one. So we found ourselves back this year at the same place that we started last year. So we made it very clear on the Republican side of the aisle that we were committed to a meaningful prescription drug benefit for senior citizens that would not bankrupt the country. Because, obviously, we can spend a trillion dollars over 10 years, or \$2 trillion over 10 years, but that certainly would not be fair to the young men and women who are out working today with children.

Their employer does not provide health insurance for them, and they have made too much money for Medicaid to provide their health coverage, and they are not old enough for Medicare and yet they are paying taxes that go for the Medicare beneficiary and the Medicaid beneficiary. We tried to be reasonable about this to get a prescription drug benefit on the books to get started in a meaningful way, and our proposal will spend \$350 billion over 10 years. I have a chart here that shows the House Republican principles on this issue.

One, we obviously want to strengthen Medicare, and we are committed to a prescription drug benefit.

Two, we want to lower the cost of prescription drugs now. We want to guarantee that for all seniors, prescription drug coverage will be covered under Medicare.

We want to improve Medicare with more choices and savings, and obviously we want to strengthen Medicare for the long-term future.

The other side of the aisle has made a lot of arguments that we are not spending enough money on prescription drugs. As I stated earlier, many of us agree with that. But when we have a Nation at war against terrorism, when we are just coming out of a recession, it is important that we get this on the books and that we be reasonable in our approach; and I think that is precisely what we are doing.

But yet I want to make it very clear because the other side of the aisle has indicated that this is not a meaningful prescription drug benefit program, which I would disagree with. But if, for example, you are a single person on Medicare today under our bill, if your salary is \$13,000 and below, then all of your prescription drugs will be paid for by the Federal Government. If you are a married couple and your joint income is \$17,910 or less, then all of your prescription drugs will be paid for by the Federal Government.

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And if you are married and you are making about \$21,000 a year, under our

proposal even some of that will be subsidized for you in addition to the other benefits that will be there for you.

So I am quite excited that tomorrow the Committee on Energy and Commerce will begin marking up this important legislation to provide finally prescription drugs for our senior citizens. My only hope is, and I am convinced, by the way, that the House of Representatives will pass it again, and my only hope is that the U.S. Senate will step up to the plate and not make this a political issue just because we are approaching an election but will step up to the plate and enter into meaningful dialogue so that they too will pass a prescription drug benefit that we can send to the President; and I know that President Bush has indicated time and time again that he will sign the legislation.

I think tomorrow is a big day for senior citizens throughout the country and for all of us who have parents and aunts and uncles who need this benefit, because, as I said, we will begin marking this up tomorrow and I think within 3 days it will be coming out of our committee and then hopefully going to the floor. I appreciate very much the gentleman yielding to me this evening. I look forward to working with him tomorrow and the next 2 to 3 days as we try to finish this matter up.

Mr. FLETCHER. I thank the gentleman from Kentucky for coming and joining us tonight. You were talking about the Democrats and some people talking about this is not a big enough plan, but it is interesting when we look to just a year ago, there was an amendment offered by the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. SPRATT), a Democrat, that set aside only \$303 billion and we have a list, and I think this is virtually every Democrat, voted for that. Yet now 1 year later, in a political year, in an election year, we have a political statement that it is not enough, even though we increased it from \$303 billion in our budget, set aside for prescription drugs and enhancing and improving Medicare, to \$350 billion. All of a sudden in an election year we hear this demagoguery, it is not enough. I really appreciate what you have said on that.

Mr. WHITFIELD. If I may make an additional comment. You are exactly correct. We are being challenged, also, of trying to raid the Social Security trust fund to pay for this. I would point out that between 1936 when Social Security started and 1995, a period that was controlled by Democrats except for about 4 years, they spent over \$800 billion from the Social Security trust fund; and no one raised questions about it, no one objected about it; and not until 1994 when the leadership of this House changed were we able to start reversing that.

One other comment that I would make is that the U.S. Senate, I am sure of what they are going to do is they are going to put out a prescription drug plan that may be in the trillions of dollars, who knows what it will be, which