

In short, the Democratic plan brings our country one step closer to insuring access to all people for much needed care, while the Republican Prescription Privatization plan is a divisive tool that will enrich the insurance and pharmaceutical industry.

The Republican plan gives authority to insurance companies and HMOs to prey on Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries.

Unlike the Republican bill, the Democrats won't punish you for getting sick.

I urge my colleagues to vote against the Republican Prescription Privatization bill.

HELL IN A CUBAN PRISON

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

Mr. LINCOLN DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH) had a wonderful idea the other week. We should speak every single week about the men and women who are languishing in prisons in the totalitarian state of Cuba, that island that has been for 44 years oppressed by a totalitarian dictator. So each week we bring forth, a number of us here, different political prisoners and speak specifically about their cases to remind our colleagues and those who will listen about the horrors just 90 miles from the shores of the United States.

□ 2100

The following are excerpts, Mr. Speaker, from a letter from dissident Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leyva who is blind. These excerpts of a letter were sent out of his prison in Holguin, Cuba, as recorded by his wife Maritza Calderin. The letter was sent to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva.

To Sylvia Iriondo of mothers and Women Against Repression. This is a letter, Mr. Speaker, sent out of prison by Juan Carlos Gonzalez Leyva.

After 13 months in prison, I have not been tried or sentenced by any court even as efforts have been made to persuade me to betray God and human rights and collaborate with the dictatorship. Since mid-December, State security used inmate Joe Prado, as he calls himself, to throw in my cell a substance that produced a burning sensation on the skin and nasal congestion, a great deal of phlegm and bronchial inflammation. The situation still continues.

Since January, they have added another substance to the sawdust they throw at me. This one gives me the sensation of millions of bugs constantly running all over me. It causes a great deal of itching and prevents me from sleeping. I do not know if this is a biological substance or chemical agent, but I know it is not insects because when I touch my skin there are no actual bugs that I can feel, although this sensation is palpable.

Normally the sawdust shower is a daily occurrence. Yesterday it started

around 6:00 p.m. when I was on my knees praying. The sensation is that of a multitude of bugs suddenly coming down on my face and my body. This torment continues until 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning.

The inmate follows me everywhere. I have to eat out of a can that I try to keep covered all the time because he will throw the nausea-provoking substance into the food.

Sometimes I feel as if I have a chain attached to my body and the weight of the world on my shoulders. I feel that I am going to collapse, that I cannot take this anymore, but I pray to God, and Jesus Christ gives me strength. It is a constant struggle, a constant torture.

On February 1, I placed my mattress in front of the cell's iron bar doors to get some fresh air. Officer Fabu, the unit chief, snatched the mattress away from me, threw me on the floor, took me by the neck and dragged me. He told me that if I wanted to sleep, I could sleep on the bare floor with the dirt, other prisoner's shoes, roaches, ants, mice, et cetera.

One night they threw so much of the substance into the cell that it was as if the walls were boiling. So I had to retreat to my bed and resign myself to do without the little bit of fresh air I was getting through the iron bars.

The substance also causes acute pain in both of my eye sockets. The pain is so severe that at times it seems my eyes are popping out. Every day the unit chief threatens me with death if I continue the hunger strike to protest the prosecution's request of 8 years in prison.

They do not allow me to speak to my lawyer and I do not have religious assistance or access to any information. I am only allowed to listen to the round tables and the State-run newscasts. For the skeptics, I can say that hell does exist and Satan shows all of his faces here.

In here, I listen to the weeping of young and old women, their terrible and frightful laments forever embedded in my mind. They plead because they are locked in cells that are like drawers where are held men, women and the elderly, the sick and the incapacitated. They plead because the four walls become a grave site.

These are catacombs where people scream but the sound is drowned out by a hermetically sealed metal door. When the women plead, the prison guards laugh and say, "What they want is a man."

I trust God and our Lord, Jesus Christ, to give me the strength to face any situation, whether to live in squalor, as I live now, or to die and meet my Lord and my God.

The political prisoner of Cuba, Mr. Speaker, 90 miles from the shores of the United States, an island that has suffered 44 years of totalitarian and oppression while the world does nothing, but we do not forget and we will not continue denouncing the horrors of the

totalitarianism that the people in Cuba suffer and we will not stop struggling until Cuba is free.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

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

CHECK WITH THE SENIOR CITIZENS

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

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Mr. Speaker, once upon a time, in 1989, there was a bill that had passed the United States Congress and was signed into law called the catastrophic health care bill, and it had bipartisan support, and all of the national organizations of senior citizens supported that legislation, and it was supposed to provide catastrophic coverage to senior citizens for health care.

One problem, no one had really checked with rank and file senior citizens to find out if they wanted this legislation that caused them to have the highest effective tax rate of any Americans, to pay for benefits that they thought simply were not worth it. In other words, the senior citizens sat down with their calculators and figured out they were not interested in this legislation that had passed.

This is a photo that appeared on the front page of the Chicago Tribune in August of 1989. Here we see some senior citizens who are clearly very angry, with signs surrounding an automobile in which was the chairman of the powerful House Committee on Ways and Means. These senior citizens were not exactly in a friendly mood and were telling this chairman in no uncertain terms that they wanted the repeal of the catastrophic health care bill.

It was not very long afterwards that this sparked a rebellion of senior citizens across the country, and in a rare occurrence in this body the catastrophic health care bill was repealed.

I think this should serve as a warning to all of my colleagues. Check with the senior citizens. You can sit here all day and all night and say the problem is that Medicare is outdated, that it is antiquated or you can say what the Chairman of the powerful House Committee on Ways and Means of today said, To those who say that the bill proposed by the Republicans would end Medicare as we know it, our answer is we certainly hope so. Seniors listen: We certainly hope so.

Mr. Speaker, I hope the seniors are listening. Old fashioned Medicare is not very good, says the chairman, the Republican chairman of the House Committee on Ways and Means.