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House of Representatives

The House met at 10:30 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC.

July 8, 2003.

I hereby appoint the Honorable TIM MURPHY to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Monahan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate has passed with amendments in which the concurrence of the House is requested a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 1. An act to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for a voluntary program for prescription drug coverage under the Medicare Program, to modernize the Medicare Program, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a deduction to individuals for amounts contributed to health savings security accounts and health savings accounts, to provide for the disposition of unused health benefits in cafeteria plans and flexible spending arrangements, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate insists upon its amendments to the bill (H.R. 1) "An Act to amend title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide for a voluntary program for prescription drug coverage under the Medicare Program, to modernize the Medicare Program, to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to allow a deduction to individuals for amounts contributed to health savings security accounts and health savings accounts, to provide for the disposition of unused health benefits in cafeteria plans and

flexible spending arrangements, and for other purposes," requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints Mr. GRASSLEY, Mr. HATCH, Mr. NICKLES, Mr. FRIST, Mr. KYL, Mr. BAUCUS, Mr. ROCKEFELLER, Mr. DASCHLE, and Mr. BREAUX, to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 7, 2003, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) for 5 minutes.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BENEFIT

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, earlier this year President Bush addressed a Michigan audience laying out his plans to restructure Medicare. He said, "If it's good enough for Members of Congress, it's good enough for seniors in this Nation." What he meant was that American seniors who enroll in Medicare should have health insurance choices like those available to Members of Congress under the health insurance plan called the Federal employees health benefits plan. President Bush was not the only one to say so. Republican leaders in the House made the same point. All of us have heard colleagues here say that. That message, that seniors should have the same kind of health insurance choices available to Members of Congress, was an important selling point for the Republican Medicare prescription drug bill.

That message is absolutely right. The problem is that the Republican bill is absolutely the opposite. The Republican Medicare bill, H.R. 1, does not even come close to giving seniors the kind of coverage that Members of Congress have provided for themselves. The Congressional Research Service says the FEHBP plan which Members of Congress are in offers a drug benefit worth \$2,700, but the same CRS, Congressional Research Service, non-partisan arm of the Congress said the Republican Medicare bill is worth only about half of that. The Republican Medicare bill does not offer American seniors health care choices just like Members of Congress even though the President said it did. It does not even come close.

Even a basic comparison shows how the Republican bill comes up woefully short. The Republican bill tells seniors they have to pay a \$250 deductible. Members of Congress do not pay a deductible. The Republican bill requires seniors with drug costs over \$2,000 to continue paying monthly premiums even though they do not get any coverage until they spend an additional \$2,900 out of pocket. Members of Congress do not make premium payments and get nothing in return. The Republican Medicare bill does not offer American seniors health care choices just like Members of Congress. It does not even come close.

The Washington Post said the drug benefit proposed by the Republicans for seniors provides merely a fraction of the drug coverage that Members of Congress receive. The chairman of the health policy department at Emory University said that drug benefits are much better in the congressional Federal employees plan. Still do not believe the Republican bill offers a bad deal for American seniors? You have to look no farther than H.R. 2631 on today's suspension calendar. H.R. 2631 says that private insurance plans under

☐ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., ☐ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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