

is an increase of \$740 billion since January of 2001 and is 41 percent of all privately held debt.

DRUG DISCOUNT CARDS

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, one of the aspects of the Medicare bill is the market-based provisions contained in the discount drug card program. These cards provide immediate help to seniors who need prescription drugs.

By bringing transparency and accountability to Medicare, the cards will help 7.3 million people with Medicare save between \$1.4 billion and \$1.8 billion altogether in discounts on their prescription. An additional feature is the \$600 credit that helps low-income cardholders buy medicine.

Individuals who make less than \$12,569 per year and couples who make less than \$16,862 are eligible for the credit. That means the first \$600 in drug costs incurred by the recipients will be covered by the Federal credits.

More than 83,000 Pennsylvania low-income seniors will benefit from the plan. There are some 40-plus cards available. Seniors can call 1-800-MEDICARE to figure out which card is best for them.

REPUBLICAN TAX REFORM HURTS SOCIAL PROGRAMS

(Ms. SOLIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today because I am deeply concerned that the Republican tax scheme is ignoring the real needs of American families. Day in and day out, we hear that the Republican majority wants to boost our economy by helping our working families, but the economic stimulus Republicans were supposed to deliver has not trickled down.

The median household income has declined by 3.3 percent, and there are over 3 million Americans living in poverty, and many of those are children. In addition, the average American worker is making less today than he did a year ago. Under this administration, our Nation and our budget does not have the resources to invest in making health care affordable, providing a sustainable Social Security plan for seniors, and ensuring that our environment is clean and safe for all of our families and our children.

Let us start listening to the real people, the working-class people who pay their taxes, who really deserve better treatment by this administration. Fundamental resources need to be restored to our families.

FOUNDING OF VALMONT IRRIGATION

(Mr. TERRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TERRY. Mr. Speaker, 50 years ago a visionary named Robert B. Daugherty introduced the world to an extraordinary product, one that would fundamentally change how the world grows its food. Mr. Daugherty went on to found Valmont Industries, maker of the center irrigation pivot. This technology has revolutionized agricultural productivity while helping to protect our vital water resources.

Today, Valmont is the world's leader in mechanized irrigation. I am proud that this company and its primary manufacturing facilities are located in Valley, Nebraska, within the Second Congressional District. But Valmont's contributions to agriculture go far beyond Nebraska's borders.

Mr. Speaker, I commend Mogens Bay, the chairman and CEO for Valmont; as well as Terry McClain, senior vice president; and CFO, Bob Meaney, senior vice president; and Tom Spears, president of the irrigation division, for their dedication and leadership of a global corporate company. And, of course, I offer my best wishes and heartiest congratulations to the man who started it all, Bob Daugherty.

□ 1015

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA APPROPRIATIONS

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning in support of the fiscal year 2005 District of Columbia Appropriations Act and most especially the responsible educational choice scholarship provisions that were added in just last year's bill, provisions that reflect the support and leadership of Mayor Anthony Williams of the District of Columbia.

It was decades ago that a southern governor stood in the doorway of a public school and said to young African American children, because of their race, they may not come in. For years the education establishment stood in the schoolhouse door and said to the grandchildren of many of those Americans that, in the interest of preserving the establishment, they may not come out.

That wall, that barrier, started to crack in recent years in Wisconsin and in Ohio and last year here on the floor of the Congress when millions of dollars were made available for thousands of children in inner city schools that have been failing for decades here in the District of Columbia.

We have the opportunity today to renew the second year of the District of Columbia opportunity scholarships. I am confident we will. I rise to praise the leadership of the Committee on Appropriations and District of Columbia Mayor Anthony Williams for taking

such a strong stand for educational opportunity for all the children of the District of Columbia.

THE U.S. ECONOMY

(Mr. MCDERMOTT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. MCDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker, if the U.S. economy is a racehorse, this administration has led the thoroughbred into a pool of wet concrete, and it is starting to set. The speed is slower and every stride is harder to take.

The U.S. economy is not some anonymous subject. It is millions of American people. What is the health of the U.S. economy? Take the pulse of the people to find out. Over 8 million Americans are without jobs. Over 43 million Americans are without health insurance. For those Americans who are working, wages are not even keeping up, much less moving ahead. The President has lost almost 2 million jobs during his watch, a feat not seen since the Depression. The drag Republicans have placed on the economy with massive budget deficits will be felt and paid for by future generations.

The American economy is a thoroughbred. It has not lost its heart but its stride is shorter and its breathing is more labored. America does not lack for heart or for innovation. America lacks leadership. It is a shortcoming we will remedy in 105 days.

RESURRECTING THE VISION OF A SPACEFARING PEOPLE

(Mr. FEENEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FEENEY. Mr. Speaker, this is a great occasion because 35 years ago a mesmerized world watched as Americans landed on the Moon. Behind me stands a moon rock that was brought back by our Apollo astronauts, and next to me is a picture of a man standing on the Moon. Thousands viewed Apollo as their calling. They assembled and launched the Saturn V from Kennedy Space Center. They overcame the tragedy of Apollo 1 and guided Apollo 11 through harrowing moments. Many of today's science and engineering leaders throughout our country were inspired as children by this adventure.

We will be able to surpass our current discoveries. The space vision that the President has laid out will take us beyond imagination. Recently Americans watched in awe at pictures coming from the Mars rovers. Soon thousands will come to Florida's space coast to watch the Shuttle return to space.

We are a restless, inquisitive, pioneering people. We yearn to go. We yearn to explore. We are Americans.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to commemorate this great 35th anniversary of Apollo 11.