

If MSHA will not act to correct its mistakes then the Congress must.

COLLEGE STUDENT RELIEF ACT
OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. JOE WILSON

OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 17, 2007

Mr. WILSON of South Carolina. Madam Speaker, I oppose H.R. 5 as it is written and support the alternative proposal by Ranking Member BUCK MCKEON. As the father of three college graduates and a college freshman, I am all too familiar with the financial burden higher education poses to families and students. That is why I am proud of Republican efforts to expand college access and increase affordability.

During the past decade, House Republicans under the leadership of John Boehner and BUCK MCKEON tripled overall Federal aid to a record \$90 billion, helping millions of Americans achieve their dream of a college education.

In addition, Republicans increased new aid for Pell students more than \$4 billion over 5 years, establishing the first ever grant program for high achieving Pell students in their first and second years of college. The program also provides grant aid to low income, high achieving students pursuing degrees in math, science, and critical foreign languages in their third and fourth years.

As lawmakers, our number one concern with regard to higher education should be to ensure that college is affordable for any student. Unfortunately, as H.R. 5 is currently written, it pits the Federal Family Education Loan Program, FFEL, against the Direct Loan program, DLP, and by doing so creates an imbalance in the student loan industry that is so lopsided only the largest FFELP lenders will survive.

While the Democrat bill was well-intentioned, its focus on interest rate reduction does not expand college access for new students which the McKeon alternative does. That is why I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of it, because it truly expands college access for young Americans.

I encourage Congress to help foster an environment that will build a student loan marketplace and not play politics with college educations.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG
PRICE NEGOTIATIONS ACT OF 2007

SPEECH OF

HON. ALBERT RUSSELL WYNN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 12, 2007

Mr. WYNN. Mr. Speaker, today, the House will take up, H.R. 4, the Medicare Prescription Drug Price Negotiations Act of 2007. H.R. 4 will require the government to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies in order to obtain reduced drug prices for seniors enrolled in the Medicare Prescription Drug Program. The bill prohibits, that in conducting these negotia-

tions, the government may not restrict access to certain drugs by requiring a particular list of covered drugs, otherwise known as a formulary. Under the Republican majority, the government was prohibited from engaging in any negotiations to utilize its buying power to reduce costs to consumers.

I have been assured by my colleagues that H.R. 4 will not involve or allow restrictions on patients' access to medicines during the negotiation process. Specifically, I have been assured that H.R. 4's prohibition against government mandated formularies is intended to protect against all forms of government imposed restrictions on patients' access to needed medicines, and that no such restrictions will be allowed under the Medicare Modernization Act as amended by H.R. 4. In casting my vote for H.R. 4, I am relying on these assurances because I firmly believe that all patients must have unrestricted access to doctor prescribed medications.

Overall, I am optimistic about this bill. While the government should have the ability to negotiate on behalf of the 43 million seniors on Medicare, we must be careful that negotiations do not result in reduced access to prescriptions. We must strike a delicate balance to ensure that lower prices do not cause drug companies to withdraw vital drugs from the Medicare Prescription Drug Program. As H.R. 4 moves forward to conference, I ask that the conferees affirmatively strengthen and clarify the rules against government imposed restrictions. If implemented properly, this bill has the potential to cut the cost of health care and improve access to medicines for millions of seniors on Medicare.

According to Families USA, while providing some relief, the current Medicare Prescription drug law has failed to slow the rapid growth in drug prices. As a cosponsor of H.R. 4 and a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, I will be exploring additional legislative measures designed to reduce costs for seniors, without reducing access to life saving drugs.

INTRODUCTION OF STIMULATING
LEADERSHIP IN CUTTING EX-
PENDITURES ("SLICE") ACT

HON. MARK UDALL

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, January 19, 2007

Mr. UDALL of Colorado. Madam Speaker, I disagree with President Bush on a number of things, but we agree that a constitutionally-sound version of a line-item veto could help increase fiscal responsibility and Congressional accountability.

In fact, I first introduced such legislation even before the president first proposed it, and last year I joined in helping win House passage of a line-item veto bill.

Unfortunately, the Senate did not complete action on that bill before the end of the 109th Congress.

So, I am today again introducing a similar measure—the "Stimulating Leadership in Cutting Expenditure, or "SLICE" Act of 2007, co-sponsored by Representative RYAN of Wisconsin.

Over the last 6 years we've seen a dramatic change in the Federal budget—a change for

the worse. We've gone from budget surpluses to big deficits, and from reducing the national debt to increasing the "debt tax" on our children.

There's no mystery about how this happened.

Partly, it was caused by a recession. Partly, it was caused by the increased spending needed for national defense, homeland security, and fighting terrorism. And in part it was caused by excessive and unbalanced tax cuts the president pushed for and the Republican-led Congress passed.

Some of those tax cuts—for example, eliminating the marriage penalty, fixing the 10 percent bracket and extending child care tax credits—were good. I supported them because they gave a reasonable boost for the economy and increased the fairness of the tax laws. But overall they were excessive.

Many of us warned against reducing the surplus so recklessly. We urged the administration and Congress to be more responsible, and we voted for Blue Dog budget resolutions that would have set a better course.

But our pleas for restraint were ignored, and since the attacks of 9/11—which led to increased spending on homeland security, a military response in Afghanistan, and a war in Iraq—the budget has nosedived from surplus into deep deficit. And, even in the face of national emergency, neither the president nor the Republican-led Congress has called on Americans for any sacrifice, and instead of temporarily scaling back some of the tax cuts the president has insisted on making all of them permanent even as Federal spending has skyrocketed.

So we have gone on putting the costs of war and everything else the government does on the national credit card—but the debt is owed not just to ourselves (as in the past), but to China, Japan and other foreign countries.

Why have we allowed things to get so far out of hand?

Part of the answer is that budget and tax policy in Washington has been so captive to very partisan and extreme ideological voices that it has been hard to find common ground and moderate consensus.

Even in this time of war, extremists in the Republican Party view tax cuts as almost a religious calling, while some in my party tend to reject any spending cuts. And the Vice President has dismissed complaints by saying "deficits don't matter."

But this cannot go on forever. Sooner or later, something has to give. And, if the result is a new sense of responsibility, sooner is better—because there is an urgent need to rethink and revise our budget policies, including both taxes and spending.

Last year, the House did belatedly take one step forward, by passing a bill similar to the "SLICE" bill I am introducing today.

And already this year, under our new leadership, the House has taken another good step by restoring the "PAYGO" rules that helped bring the budget into balance in the past—something the Republican leadership refused to even consider last year.

But I think we also should take the step of again passing a constitutionally-sound line-item veto—like SLICE—because it also can help to promote transparency and accountability about spending.

We have heard a lot of talk about spending "earmarks"—meaning spending based on proposals by Members of Congress instead of the