

It is time for this Congress and this country to come together, unified, and deal with these very serious problems that we face.

It is not a partisan issue for senior citizens in Arkansas in the First Congressional District to not be able to afford their medicine that they need to stay healthy, stay alive, and have a decent life. It is not a partisan issue that this country continues to allow the prescription drug manufacturers to rob our senior citizens. It is not a partisan issue that our farmers are more economically distressed than they have been since the Great Depression. Our farmers do a wonderful job. We have a farm program that is just really not adequate. But never in the history of this country has it been more important to have the ability to produce the food and fiber that we need in our own land.

Our manufacturers are distressed because of foreign competition because the value of the dollar, just like it affects the farmers, makes them not competitive in the international marketplace. Our health care system, because of the failure of this Congress to rescind cuts for Medicare reimbursements to our hospitals and doctors, is threatened. We have rural hospitals and rural providers of all kinds that do not know whether they are going to be able to continue to provide Medicare services or not because the reimbursement rates are so low.

We are faced with having to make a decision to reduce the amount of money that is going to be spent on Federal highways very soon if this economy does not improve dramatically. These are not partisan issues. If you do not have a road to get there on, it does not matter whether you are a Democrat or a Republican.

The First Congressional District of Arkansas benefits more from good highways than almost any place in the country. And yet we have to struggle to get the money to accomplish the task that we have at hand, and that is to complete good four-lane highways across the First Congressional District.

We know that our education system is going to be underfunded because of cuts that have been made in the budget and expected cuts that will be made in appropriations. Our debt has grown out of control and we continue to borrow from our children and grandchildren and pass the burden on to them rather than come together, Democrats and Republicans on the floor of this House, and come to a consensus agreement on how we should deal with these serious issues.

We know how to fight a war. We will figure out and we are figuring out how to deal with terrorism, and we will get those jobs done, and we should get those jobs done; and we should spare no resources to accomplish that task. But for the domestic economy, for the things that affect Americans and Arkansans and the citizens of the First Congressional District of Arkansas, we

should be working on a plan today; and right now no one is working on a plan to deal with this great economic distress that we face. We know it continues to get worse.

We have begged. We have begged both sides. I belong to the Blue Dog Coalition; and we have encouraged both sides, come together, let us develop a plan. Let us do what is good for America and get the job done.

PASS PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CULBERSON). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kentucky (Mr. FLETCHER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FLETCHER. Mr. Speaker, as we have passed a continuing resolution to take us until at least November 22, I would like to talk about some unfinished business, as we have passed legislation over to the Senate and the Senate has yet to act upon that legislation. One of the important pieces of legislation that they have not acted upon is the prescription drug plan.

We worked very hard, our leadership, the Republican leadership, worked very hard to pass a prescription drug plan that would lower the cost of prescription drugs immediately. It would devote about \$350 billion to prescription drug coverage as well as enhancing Medicare and ensuring that providers would continue to be accessible to patients. It also was a voluntary coverage.

It also guaranteed choice, that seniors would have at least two plans; and, again, it was a guaranteed benefit under Medicare. It would provide immediate savings, and the Congressional Budget Office estimated that the savings would be up to 44 percent for seniors.

I know in my State of Kentucky we have about 50 percent of the seniors would have fallen within the range of 175 percent of the poverty level or below, which means that about half of our seniors in Kentucky would have received supplemental help on their premiums, which means that those at 150 percent of the poverty level and below would have virtually paid no out-of-pocket expenses for their prescription drugs. These are the people that are having to decide between food and their prescription drugs, and it would have been a tremendous help to them.

Yet, as we passed the plan over, the Senate has not acted on the prescription drug plan. Let me say this, it is very unfortunate as we have passed here the resolution to make sure we continue to deal with the war on terrorism, we have passed a number of other pieces of legislation dealing with the economy, with health care, with energy policy, that we find out on many of those issues and bills that we have passed over, the Senate has not acted upon those bills. Let me just say this, the Democrat leadership, as we

have seen and I believe, are playing politics as we approach an election here and have left the seniors without the prescription drug coverage that they need.

I am very pleased, Mr. Speaker, that we worked very hard to make sure that the bill for prescription drugs was a very balanced bill, a very reasonable bill, and a very doable bill. And as we passed that over to the Senate, again, they have not acted on that bill.

I would hope as we come back after the November 5 elections that this very important issue would be taken up, that we would be able to provide our seniors across America with the prescription drug bill that would provide the care that is needed. Again, I think it is very important as we look at how medicine has changed over the last number of years, going from acute care to just treating disease, to prevention and chronic disease management, the need for prescription drugs grows continually. As we have more and new and better prescription treatments for patients to prevent disease and to manage chronic diseases, I think it is only equitable and fair that we include those in a modern Medicare program.

Mr. Speaker, once again, as we close out until after the election, at the call of the Speaker, I find it very disappointing that the Democrats have not, through their leadership, taken up the prescription drug plan that we have passed here and passed that to provide coverage for the American people. Instead, they have put politics above the American people.

CORRECTION TO THE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD OF THURSDAY OCTOBER 10, 2002 AT PAGE H7885

The incorrect versions of the following concurrent resolutions were inadvertently printed. The correct engrossed versions are as follows:

H. CON. RES. 486

Whereas over 30,300 people will be diagnosed with pancreatic cancer this year in the United States;

Whereas the mortality rate for pancreatic cancer is 99 percent, the highest of any cancer;

Whereas pancreatic cancer is the 4th most common cause of cancer death for men and women in the United States;

Whereas there are no early detection methods and minimal treatment options for pancreatic cancer;

Whereas when symptoms of pancreatic cancer generally present themselves, it is too late for an optimistic prognosis, and the average survival rate of those diagnosed with metastasis disease is only 3 to 6 months;

Whereas pancreatic cancer does not discriminate by age, gender, or race, and only 4 percent of patients survive beyond 5 years;

Whereas the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network (PanCAN), the only national advocacy organization for pancreatic cancer patients, facilitates awareness, patient support, professional education, and advocacy for pancreatic cancer research funding, with a view to ultimately developing a cure for pancreatic cancer; and

Whereas the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network has requested that the Congress designate November as Pancreatic Cancer