ON THE INTRODUCTION OF VOLUNTARY STATE DISCOUNT PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN ACT OF 2007

HON. CHRIS VAN HOLLEN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 1, 2007

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to introduce the Voluntary State Discount Prescription Drug Plan Act of 2007—a completely voluntary, commonsense way to offer prescription drugs at affordable prices to millions of Americans currently struggling without prescription drug coverage.

This legislation would enable States, at their option, to create State discount prescription drug plans that extend Medicaid-negotiated rebates to citizens up to 300 percent of the poverty line and thereby provide discounts of roughly 40 percent to 50 million uninsured Americans—all at their local pharmacies, all at no cost to the Federal or State Government. Just like HMOs and insurance plans in the private sector, participating States would simply leverage their purchasing power to secure better prices on behalf of their citizens. In that regard, our bill would explicitly authorize recent prescription drug affordability initiatives in States like Maryland, Maine, and Vermont by removing barriers that have needlessly blocked these efforts in the past.

In 2005, my home State of Maryland passed a State discount prescription drug plan law with the near unanimous support of our General Assembly and our then Republican Governor Robert Ehrlich. Unfortunately, that plan was subsequently blocked by the Bush administration's Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services, CMS, for reasons that have never been credibly explained. As a result, the broad bipartisan will of our State has been thwarted and hundreds of thousands of Marylanders have been deprived needed access to affordable prescription drugs. In fact, according to an analysis of U.S. Census data conducted by Families USA and the Center for Policy Alternatives, an estimated half million Marylanders would become eligible for immediate prescription drug price relief under this legislation.

Since these plans are created at the State level and don't impose any cost on the Federal Government, we don't believe States should have to ask the Federal Government's permission in order to establish them. For that reason, our legislation makes clear that Maryland—and any other State that chooses—can set up a State discount prescription drug plan without petitioning CMS for a section 1115 waiver. Additionally, since these plans rely on government purchasing power rather than government outlays to produce price discounts, we remove CMS's somewhat contrived requirement that states expend some undefined amount of their own money as part of these plans. Beyond modest administrative costs, it simply isn't necessary.

Madam Speaker, this legislation represents a significant opportunity to empower States to deliver prescription drug affordability to millions of our citizens who don't currently have it—at no cost to the Federal Government. I hope Congress seizes this opportunity, and I invite my colleagues' support.

150TH ANNIVERSARY OF JACKSON, COUNTY, MINNESOTA

HON. TIMOTHY J. WALZ

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 1, 2007

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, today I rise to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Jackson County, Minnesota.

The first settlers in what would become Jackson County were three brothers, William, George and Charles Wood. They established a trading post in the town of Springfield, which would later be renamed Jackson.

Jackson County was established on May 23rd, 1857, and named for Hon. Henry Jackson, the first merchant in St. Paul. The earliest years were not easy: Jackson, the county seat, was entirely deserted twice. But in 1865, settlers returned following the Civil War and put down their roots. Homes were built from native timber and prairie sod and a school house was constructed to serve the community.

From those early days, Jackson County has continued to grow. Today it is a leader in agriculture production and home to a beautiful courthouse and an historic state theatre.

I would like to congratulate the residents of Jackson County as they celebrate their 150th anniversary and wish them a bright future.

GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN TO APOLOGIZE

SPEECH OF

HON. DAVID WU

OF OREGON

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, July 30, 2007

Mr. WU. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 121 to call on the Japanese government to formally and unequivocally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility for its Imperial Army's coercion of young women, known as ''comfort women,'' into sexual slavery during the World War II era.

I would first like to commend my distinguished colleague, Mr. HONDA, for introducing this important resolution and for his leadership and hard work on this critical matter. I further want to recognize the extraordinary friendship between Japan and the United States, a friendship which has spanned at least half a century.

This resolution is being considered today so that the truth about comfort women will remain in the history books.

An estimated 200,000 women were sexually exploited by the Japanese armed forces during Japan's military expansion and wartime occupation of Asia and the Pacific Islands from the 1930s through World War II. Although Koreans made up the majority of these euphemistically termed ''comfort women,'' Chinese, Taiwanese, Filipino, Dutch, and Indonesian women also were victimized.

Comfort women were used for recreational sex by Japanese soldiers as a military strategy to increase the soldiers' efficiency. These women were mentally and physically dehumanized and subject to extreme sexual violence. Only a few hundred of these courageous survivors of the World War II horror are still alive today.

Undoubtedly, today's Japan is a world leader and a valued ally to the United States. It is not the intent of Congress to punish Japan, but to help Japan acknowledge comfort women as part of its wartime history. An official, unambiguous apology from the Japanese government for its wartime atrocities is vital for historical record, emotional healing, and the education of future generations.

I support this resolution, and I urge my colleagues to do the same.

LEGALIZING INTERNET SPORTS GAMBLING IS DANGEROUS

HON. DONALD M. PAYNE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 1, 2007

Mr. PAYNE. Madam Speaker, I would like to address the troubling issue of gambling on sports. In the past couple of weeks, basketball fans throughout the Nation have been shocked and saddened by revelations that a referee was gambling on games he officiated, and may have affected the outcomes of those games. A player or referee gambling on his own game is probably the single greatest betrayal that can be committed against fans of the sport.

The temptation to sports corruption does not come out of nowhere. It comes out of a culture where many people turn a blind eye to the fact that sports gambling is illegal in 49 States. And, as USA Today reported, athletes and officials become vulnerable when they develop a gambling problem on other sports, or even on other types of gambling.

I received a letter this week from the professional and collegiate sports associations—which I believe my colleague, the gentleman from New York (Mr. TOWNS), already placed in the RECORD—that reveals efforts in this Congress to legitimize sports gambling online. This is the last thing we need. We should help raise awareness of the threat that gambling poses to cherished American athletics. We should never put a stamp of approval on sports gambling.

Last year, I voted for the Unlawful Internet Gambling Enforcement Act of 2006, in part because our laws against sports gambling were being evaded and eroded by offshore gambling operators. Now the same companies we shooed out of the illegal marketplace in the U.S. last fall are back supporting H.R. 2046, which would license them to take bets, including sports bets, from Americans.

They have their slick arguments. They say the individual sports leagues can opt out—as if gambling on basketball could possibly be any more or less harmful than gambling on football or hockey or soccer. They say the bill will raise tax revenue. Well, the ways we can raise tax revenue are nearly infinite—that's no excuse for bad policy. They say legal gambling can be better monitored—but it was legal gambling that got Tom Donaghy deep in debt and drove him to turn to criminal gambling.

I agree with the sports associations and my colleague from New York (Mr. Towns) that the harms of sports gambling far outweigh any alleged benefits. I urge my colleagues to reject any efforts to legitimize sports gambling in this Nation.

TSA PROCUREMENT REFORM ACT OF 2007

HON. CHRISTOPHER P. CARNEY

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 1, 2007

Mr. CARNEY. Madam Speaker, today I am introducing the "TSA Procurement Reform Act of 2007." This Act will increase contracting transparency at the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), open opportunities for small businesses, and eliminate wasteful and duplicative bureaucracy. This Act is necessary because TSA was exempted from the near-universal federal contracting system, the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR), after the September 11th terrorist attacks.

It makes no sense that every other organization in the Department of Homeland Security—and the vast majority of the federal government—is governed by the Federal Acquisition Regulation, yet TSA plays by its own rules. Even while we are at war, the Department of Defense uses the FAR. This exemption for TSA creates an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy, decreases competition, and shuts out small businesses from too many contracting opportunities.

The legislation will repeal the TSA's exemption from federal contracting laws 180 days after enactment. The legislation is supported by a broad coalition from the oversight and business communities. Citizens Against Government Waste and the Professional Services Council—a trade association representing more than 220 federal contractors—both support the intent of this bill.

Years of contract mismanagement prove that there is no longer justification for the exemption. Over the last several years, the TSA has awarded contracts filled with wasteful spending, including a contract to Boeing that jumped from $508 million to $1.2 billion and a contract to Pearson Government Solutions that first cost $104 million and skyrocketed to $741 million in less than one year.

I look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the Capitol and both sides of the aisle to ensure that we strengthen our homeland security as much as possible and eliminate the many deficiencies at DHS and throughout the federal government impeding our Nation from being as safe as we would like.

CONGRATULATING MR. NED NORRIS, JR. ON HIS CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE TOHONO O'ODHAM NATION.

HON. RAÚL M. GRIJALVA

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 1, 2007

Mr. GRIJALVA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to take the opportunity to honor the new Chairman of the Tohono O'odham Nation.

An exceptional citizen of my community and the Tohono O'odham Nation, Chairman Ned Norris, Jr., is from the remote village of Fresnal Canyon, in the Baboquivari District. He was elected to a 4-year term as the Chairman of the Tohono O'odham Nation earlier this spring.

Chairman Norris is in his 32nd year of serving the Tohono O'odham Nation. In May of 2003, he was elected to serve as Vice Chairman of the Tohono O'odham Nation. Both before and after holding the position of Vice Chairman, he worked with the Tohono O'odham Gaming Enterprise. Chairman Norris served as Assistant Director of Marketing and Public Relations, Director of Marketing & Public Relations, Casino Manager and Director of Community Relations. The Enterprise operates both Desert Diamond Casino locations in Tucson and Golden Ha:san Casino near Why, Arizona.

His service to his Tribe has been ongoing. In addition to holding the position of Chairman and Vice Chairman, he has also served as the Assistant Director of the Tribe's Children's Home; Court Advocate; Children's Court Judge; Court of Appeals Judge; Indian Child Welfare Specialist; Assistant Director of Tribal Social Services and Director of Tribal Government Operations. On February 1, 1993 Chairman Norris completed a 6 year Tohono O'odham Legislative Council appointment as (non-attorney) tribal Judge, the last 3 of those years as Chief Judge for the Judicial Branch.

Chairman Norris is also very involved in the surrounding community of Tucson, AZ. He is currently a board member of the Chicanos Por La Causa, Tucson Urban League, American Indian Association, Inc., and the University of Arizona—Arthritis Center Advisory Board; Tucson Metropolitan Education Commission; KUAT Communications Group-Advisory Board; and the Tucson Airport Authority-Advisory Board. Additionally he is a former board member of the Sunnyside Unified School District Governing Board; and a former Commissioner for the Tohono O'odham Nation's Tribal Employment Rights Office.

I would also like to acknowledge Isidro B. Lopez, as the new vice-chair of the Tohono O'odham Nation. His leadership and experience will serve Chairman Norris and the Nation well.

I would like to offer my congratulations to Ned Norris for his over three decades of service to his Nation and the people of Pima County and southern Arizona.

THE U.S.-CHINA COMPETITIVENESS AGENDA OF 2007

HON. MARK STEVEN KIRK

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, August 1, 2007

Mr. KIRK. Madam Speaker, today I am proud to join my good friend, the gentleman from Washington (Mr. LARSEN), in unveiling the bipartisan U.S.-China Competitiveness Agenda of 2007. This agenda includes four legislative priorities to expand America's influence in China and increase American competitiveness in the global marketplace.

As co-chairs of the bipartisan House U.S.-China Working Group, we are working in Congress to elevate the sophistication of our debate on U.S.-China issues. The U.S.-China Competitiveness Agenda provides Congress with a constructive legislative package to expand U.S. engagement with China while supporting key domestic and foreign policy objectives.

Along with two other Working Group members, Congresswoman SUSAN DAVIS (D–Calif.) and Congressman STEVE ISRAEL (D–N.Y.), we are introducing bipartisan legislation to expand America's diplomatic infrastructure in China, boost support to small- and medium-sized businesses exporting to the China market, increase funds for domestic Chinese language instruction and build new cooperative energy ties between the U.S. and China.

The U.S. has one embassy and four consulates in China, leaving more than 200 cities with a population greater than one million people with little to no American representation. Additionally, while 60 percent of U.S. exports go to the Asia-Pacific market, the U.S. contributes 100 times more dollars to Europe's Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development than to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum.

My legislation, the U.S.-China Diplomatic Expansion Act of 2007, authorizes the construction of a new consulate in Wuhan (population eight million) and 10 smaller diplomatic posts in cities with more than a million people. The bill triples funding for public diplomacy, boosts funding for a range of language, student and teacher exchange programs, increases funding for rule of law initiatives and more than triples the U.S. contribution to Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation.

If we are serious about intellectual property rights, consumer product safety and economic competitiveness, we need a diplomatic infrastructure in China that reflects those priorities. We can't send more food inspectors to China to ensure the safety of imports if we don't have a place to put them. We can't work on issues like the theft of American patents, environmental protection, human rights and labor standards if we don't fund rule-of-law initiatives. My legislation would expand the diplomatic infrastructure to accomplish these objectives.

I am proud to co-sponsor three other bipartisan bills in the U.S.-China Competitiveness Agenda, including Mr. LARSEN's U.S.-China Market Engagement and Export Promotion Act of 2007, Ms. DAVIS' U.S.-Chinese Language Engagement Act of 2007 and Mr. ISRAEL's U.S.-China Energy Cooperation Act of 2007.

Mr. LARSEN's bill would help states establish export promotion offices in China and create a new China Market Advocate program at U.S. Export Assistance Centers around the nation. The bill provides assistance to small businesses for China trade missions and authorizes grants for Chinese business education programs.

I strongly support the U.S.-China Market Engagement and Export Promotion Act because we need innovative programs that support our small business exports and arm them with the tools they need to succeed in China.

Roughly 200 million students are learning English in China today. By contrast, only about 50,000 primary and secondary school students study Chinese in America. Ms. DAVIS' bill increases Chinese cultural studies and language acquisition for elementary, high school and college-age students. Grants would be available to fund university joint venture programs, virtual cultural exchanges with Chinese schools and intensive summer language instruction programs.

We have more than just a trade deficit with China—we also have a knowledge deficit. That is why I strongly support the U.S.-Chinese Language Engagement Act. We need additional funding for domestic Chinese language programs, educational exchanges and