

**QUESTIONABLE ACTIVITIES DURING AND AFTER MEDICARE
PRESCRIPTION DRUG LEGISLATION PASSED THE HOUSE -- (House of
Representatives - February 03, 2004)**

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. *Pallone*) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, tonight I would like to highlight several questionable activities during and after the Medicare prescription drug legislation passed the House of Representatives last year, and there is no doubt that this legislation, which passed here in the House after the Republican majority kept the vote open more than 3 hours in order to get the results they want, and it would be one thing, Mr. Speaker, if the result were beneficial to seniors who desperately need prescription drug coverage within the Medicare system; however, that is simply not the case.

The prescription drug legislation is a perfect example of how the Republican majority has turned the people's House of Representatives over to the special interests and the wealthy elite. Seniors should not be forced or, I should say, be fooled into believing that this Medicare legislation was written for their benefit. How could it have been considering Republicans forcing seniors to actually get the prescription drug benefits out of Medicare?

The bill also provides a minuscule benefit, considering that seniors with \$1,000 in annual prescription drug costs would pay \$857 out of their own pockets and those seniors with prescription drug costs of \$5,000 per year would be forced to pay \$3,920. What kind of a benefit is that if seniors are not getting the money? Where is the more than \$500 billion that now the President and the White House says that this Medicare prescription drug so-called benefit is going to cost the Federal Government? Where is the money going?

The answer, Mr. Speaker, is to the special interests. Republicans did not write this bill to help the seniors; instead, they wrote it to benefit insurance companies and the pharmaceutical companies.

Now, I could talk all night about why this bill is bad and how it is not helpful to seniors, and I think that I and my Democratic colleagues have talked many times, including last week, about the problems with this bill and why it should just be repealed. But the amazing thing about it is that now we are hearing that many of those legislators and members of the administration who benefited or who were involved in creating this bill, negotiating this bill, bringing the bill out of committee, working to put together the language of the bill, are now benefiting from leaving their jobs within the administration, or possibly within Congress, in order to join the private sector and working for those same pharmaceutical companies that they worked with when they were up on the Hill or they were in Washington working for the government to put this bill together.

In fact, many of my colleagues have been saying for months that this legislation was being written not here on Capitol Hill but instead downtown in the offices of PhRMA, which is the pharmaceutical trade association, and also written by the insurance companies. Here in the Republican-controlled House of Representatives the only true voices that matter, in my opinion, on this bill, are the special interests and the wealthy elite.

There is no better example of how the lines have been blurred between Congress writing legislation and legislation being dictated to by special interests than the latest news that the House Committee on Energy and Commerce chairman, and this is my committee, the Committee on Energy and Commerce, the Republican chairman, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. *Tauzin*), is now flirting with the possibility of leaving the House in order to lead PhRMA, that very pharmaceutical trade organization that represents those companies here in

Washington. And he is one of the few House Republicans who negotiated the final prescription drug bill legislation last year.

We just heard, actually within the last few hours, that the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. *Tauzin*) announced that in fact he is going to be stepping down as chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce on February 16, within the next week or so, and that he is seriously mulling going to work as the head of PhRMA.

Now, I understand, Mr. Speaker, that there is nothing wrong with Chairman *Tauzin* deciding to retire and inquiring about future job opportunities. But one has to seriously question whether discussions between him and representatives of PhRMA just months after PhRMA received a cash windfall with the prescription drug legislation are appropriate. It certainly serves as a perfect example of what I was saying before of what interests Republicans represent: the special interests.

There has been no indication from Chairman *Tauzin's* office that he was negotiating a job with PhRMA last summer when he was also negotiating the prescription drug bill, and I hope that is not the case. However, the bottom line is that he was the main person in the House of Representatives responsible for this bill. And for him to now leave Congress and go seek a job with that very trade association that was benefiting from the bill, I think, is a serious ethical question and something that has to be looked into.

I see that some of my colleagues are here joining me. We are going to talk not only about this case but others, and I would yield now to the gentleman from Massachusetts.