

bonuses to reduce care, was the intent of Congress in authorizing HMOs in the first place! If injured patients could sue HMOs for withholding care, Souter wrote, it would result in “nothing less than elimination of the for-profit HMO.”

In other words, according to the U.S. Supreme Court, HMOs cannot exist without being given *carte blanche* to kill and injure innocent people by rationing health care.

Ladies and Gentlemen, fellow Democrats: The situation is urgent. HMOs must be abolished before more innocent lives are lost.

## Drugging Our Children into Submission

by Rep. LeAnna Washington

Good afternoon, I am State Representative LeAnna Washington, and I represent the 200th Legislative District in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the effects of psychotropic drugs on this nation’s children.

I am glad to see attention being focused at the national level on the use of these mind-altering drugs on our most vulnerable population, our children, our future.

In 1968, three years after the U.S. Elementary and Secondary Act was passed, broadening the definition of “handicapped” to include “mental disturbance,” this gave psychiatry the green light to label and drug children into compliance. A new category for children emerged called “behavior disorders of childhood and adolescence.” In 1975, the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed, providing “special education” classes for learning disabled [LD] children. Within two years, the number of children labeled LD reached more than 782,000. This figure soared to 1.9 million in 1989, and by 1996 it reached 2.6 million. Yet, Kevin Dwyer, assistant executive director of the National Association of School Psychologists, admitted that the way “learning disorders” are diagnosed is “not a science.”

In 1987, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) was literally voted into existence by the American Psychiatric Association. Within one year, 500,000 children in the United States were diagnosed with this affliction.

In 1990, the lucrative doors were opened to a cash welfare program to low-income parents whose children were diagnosed with ADHD. A family could get more than \$450 a month for each child. In 1989, children with ADHD made up 5% of the disabled population. In 1995, it rose to 25%. In 1991, education grants also funded schools an additional \$400 in annual grants money for each child. The same year, the Department of Education recognized it as a handicap, provid-

ing children with special services. In 1997, 4.4 million children were diagnosed with ADHD. In 1996, \$15 billion was spent annually on the diagnosis, treatment, and study of these so-called disorders.

Ritalin and similar drugs are prescribed to an estimated 6 million to 9 million children and adolescents in the United States. This reflects why Ritalin production has increased an incredible 700% since 1990.

Ritalin use in the U.S. is five times higher than the rest of the world combined.

The question of whether or not these drugs are helping or



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hurting our children is the subject of great debate. It has been suggested that recent incidents of school violence and other occasions of violence are the result of children being unnecessarily medicated by such drugs.

Others maintain that placing the blame on these drugs is an over-reaction, and that the drugs are safe if used properly. According to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, from 1991 to 1995, the number of preschoolers on antidepressants increased 200%, and the number of children ages 2 to 4 taking stimulants more than doubled.

I have been concerned about this issue for quite some time. As an African-American representing a predominantly African-American legislative district in the city of Philadelphia, I am witness to what I believe is the disproportionate prescribing of these medicines to minority children.

During my studies of the issue, I have learned that drugs such as Ritalin have become a convenient “easy way out” substitute for dealing with problems that often are unique to

poor, urban youth.

My concern led me to present workshops on the event before other policymakers, including last summer's presentation before the National Organization of Women Legislators.

Also, I sponsored a ratified resolution on the matter during the recent National Black Caucus of State Legislators annual legislative conference.

I want others to be aware that chemically treating our children at the rate and manner in which we are, may lead to problems in our society that will require great cost, both emotionally and financially, to correct.

All too often, psychotropic drugs are prescribed to children without an attempt to first understand the underlying factors that may be contributing to the behavior of the child in question.

Many overlooked factors such as parental stress, a changing family environment, or diet may influence a child's behavior.

The question policymakers and health officials should be seeking to answer is, whether or not Ritalin and similar drugs are being over-prescribed to help cope with normal life events, or, are they treating real disorders.

I am convinced that most behavioral problems may be just as treatable using other methods, such as nutrition, family, and community support. Patience and love also can be as effective as medication in certain instances.

Drugs should be a last resort, not the first step in solving emotional and behavioral problems in our children.

There is much work to be done in dealing with this issue. I support President Clinton in advocating the development of new research approaches for the study of medications for children.

As you know, medications are not typically studied in children because of ethical concerns about involving children in clinical trials. While these concerns are legitimate, they have created a lack of knowledge about the best treatments for children.

It is unconscionable to think that we have for years been giving them these drugs without actually knowing what long-term effects they may have.

In closing, allow me to voice one final concern regarding Ritalin: Ritalin is a Schedule II controlled substance, which the Federal government strictly regulates. It is in the same class as cocaine. There is a push to have Ritalin downgraded from a Schedule II drug. We can not let that happen.

I am concerned that relaxing controls will give young people easier access to a drug that already is used to get high and frequently is used by young people and college students on campus all across America. Students are giving and selling their medication to classmates who are crushing and snorting the powder like cocaine. In March of 1995, two deaths, in Mississippi and Virginia, were associated with this activity.

Thank you for listening, and thank you for your interest in this important issue.

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## Constitutional Law and Justice

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# We Must Defend the Voting Rights Act

by Sen. Theo Mitchell

*Mr. Mitchell is a former South Carolina State Senator and Democratic nominee for governor, who was targeted for prosecution under the FBI's Operation Fruhmenschen program.*

Mr. Chairman, and distinguished members of the panel, I certainly want you to know how grateful I am to take up a few minutes of your time. That you would allow such, on the issue of a very major problem. And that is, that we want those of you that will be going to the Democratic National Convention, to seek to have a plank in the platform repudiating the argument advanced by the Democratic National Committee, through its Republican lawyer, in the case of *LaRouche v. Fowler*, calling for the nullification of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Several of you signed on to a letter over my signature, which some 1,000-plus did participate in sending, a message that this is not the time, nor the place, to talk nonsense, especially from a party that has traditionally been known to consist, very heavily, of minorities, and those who represent the poor, the forgotten, the disadvantaged, the women, and principles and esteemed ideals and goals for making the Constitution of the United States work, for everybody.

Some of you, as well as myself, happen to have been elected to office, pursuant to the Voting Rights Act, especially from the Southern part of the United States. It's most appalling to know that [former DNC Chair] Don Fowler sent out in 1996, a call to chairs throughout the United States, of the Democratic Party, to repudiate those individuals, and reject seating them, who supported Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. for President. A lawsuit was filed, of which I happen to have been privileged to be one of the lawyers. The case even went up to the United States Supreme Court. But prior to going there, it was one in which the all-knowing judge, [Thomas] Penfield Jackson, whose wisdom broke up Microsoft, supposedly, sat and refused to have a three-judge panel impaneled to hear this case, raising the constitutionality of the act done by Don Fowler.

Now, I'm from South Carolina. Fowler was one who refused to have the Democratic National Committee contribute to my campaign for governor of South Carolina, after having won a bitter primary election. He's the kind of person who'd