

the contract's tax cut for the rich, and in complete disregard of the merits of these food assistance programs, the Republicans are risking incurring significant long term Federal, State, and local cost of health care, remedial education, and decreased worker productivity.

Of course, there is room for improvement in the programs—we work on this every year. Congress is constantly working to improve efficiency, decrease paperwork, and end fraud in these programs. Last year the Ed. and Labor Committee reauthorized the School Lunch Act. I worked with Members on both sides of the aisle to add a strict penalty for anticompetitive bid-rigging by food suppliers. Almost every year Mr. DE LA GARZA and the members of the Agriculture Committee have passed legislation to curb fraud in the Food Stamp Program.

These programs are good for the recipients and the taxpayers. The block grant contains no requirement that the food programs States create maintain any uniform nutrition standards. The recommended daily allowances for kids and adults in California is the same as those in New York. Only the ability of the children and their families to pay for that food varies.

The current taxpayer savings the Republicans are putting in jeopardy are:

Every \$1 spent in the WIC program saves between \$2 and \$4 dollars in Federal Medicaid costs.

Every \$1 spent on elderly programs—Meals-on-Wheels and Congregate Meals program—saves \$3 on Federal Medicare, Medicaid, and veteran's health care costs. Malnourished patients stay in the hospital nearly twice as long as those who are well-nourished, costing an additional \$2,000—\$10,000 per stay.

Malnutrition permanently impairs brain development and a child's ability to learn, causing an increase in the number of children failing in school and a significant increase in the local and Federal cost of remedial education.

Nutrition programs significantly decrease anemia in adults as well as children and the elderly. Studies show anemia lowers worker productivity and ability to learn new and emerging fields, hurting our ability to compete in global economy.

In my district, as in all other districts across our country, this block grant means more than a loss in food assistance. In Contra Costa County alone it means almost 400 fewer grocery store jobs, \$6.6 million less in wages, and the closure of over a dozen food stores.

I understand the Republicans want to move quickly in debating their proposed legislation in order to meet their 100 day-deadline. However, if the cost will be measured in taxpayer dollars and human lives, it would be unconscionable of the Republicans not to slow down. Please, talk to your constituents, visit a WIC center, eat a school lunch, and find out why these programs are so popular and successful. You owe at least that to yourself, our children, and our country.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. GEKAS). Under a previous order of the

House, the gentlewoman from Arkansas [Mrs. LINCOLN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. LINCOLN addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mrs. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

NUTRITION PROGRAMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida [Mrs. THURMAN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. THURMAN. Mr. Speaker, if you look closely at the fine print of the Republican welfare reform plan, there is a proposal that threatens the lives of almost 5 million older Americans. This proposal threatens to force our seniors to go hungry. But so far, this issue has gone virtually overlooked in the large-scale national debate over welfare reform.

It is buried deep within the legislative language of the Republican's Contract With America. It is contained under the section that consolidates nutrition programs for the poor. It seeks to eliminate the crucial nutrition section of the 30-year-old Older Americans Act and to lump funding for senior citizen nutrition programs in with all other food programs.

Seniors are at particular risk under the proposal. While the welfare plan does spell out some mandatory minimums each State must spend on nutrition programs, it does not specify any minimum for elderly nutrition.

Therefore, this proposal would allow States to completely wipe out Meals-On-wheels and other vital services. No protection is afforded by the Federal Government.

Pulling senior nutrition out of the Older Americans Act and separating it from other services for the elderly will make it much harder for communities to assist older people with complex needs. None of us want to create a situation where competing interests are vying for their fair share. We cannot allow a situation to develop where the needs of seniors are pitted against the needs of hungry children.

There is no question that our current welfare system is in need of reform. The debate over welfare reform taking place across this country needs to focus on connecting recipients to the workplace. It should deal with personal responsibility and work, not just saving money. We should be guided by principles that help us solve problems, not create new ones.

The Elderly Nutrition Program, as part of the Older Americans Act, is a program that works. They have a proven track record of success.

Before we can appreciate the value of these programs, we need to understand the problems they address and the effectiveness of their results.

Today, many seniors do not eat adequately because they cannot afford to do so. Moreover, they lack the skills to prepare nourishing, well-balanced meals. Because many of these elderly people have limited mobility, it can be difficult to shop and cook for themselves. Also, many seniors experience feelings of loneliness which sometimes hinder their incentive to make a meal and eat it alone.

These and other physiological, social, and economic changes that occur with aging, result in a pattern of living that causes malnutrition and further physical and mental deterioration.

Since 1973, the Nutrition Program for the Elderly has provided older Americans, particularly those with low incomes, nutritionally sound meals. The broad objective of the Nutrition Program for the Elderly is to nourish the whole older person, not simply to supply basic nutrients.

About 3.3 million seniors are served hot meals in strategically located centers such as schools, churches, community centers, and senior citizen centers. Seniors in this program depend on the fruit, milk, meat, and potatoes because it is often their only balanced meal of the day.

Public and private facilities are also used where seniors can obtain other social and rehabilitative services. This encourages older persons to maintain independence by encouraging social interaction, while at the same time improving nutrition. This program is the cornerstone of a comprehensive, community based and managed service system aimed at providing opportunities for older people to remain independent and self-sufficient.

For those who are homebound, meals are delivered and other supportive services are provided, where necessary and feasible. Nationally, more than 794,000 seniors, 49,000 now in my home State of Florida, have meals delivered to their homes. Yet, the program today cannot serve all who need it. If the nutrition program is to be continued as part of a block grant, it is estimated that nearly 20 percent of the seniors now served would no longer receive meals and nutrition services due to reductions in funding.

Besides promoting better health among the elderly through improved nutrition, this program is aimed at reducing the isolation of old age and offering Americans the opportunity to maintain self-sufficiency. The nutrition program is a fundamental part of a comprehensive service system aimed at keeping older people at home, supporting family caregivers, and avoiding unnecessary and costly nursing home care.

These programs are supported through a vast network of volunteers and through cash and in-kind support from local private sector