

What we need is a considered debate on this subject. Apparently my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are content to maintain the status quo by these scare tactics, and let Medicare go bankrupt.

Mr. Speaker, the Republican majority will not let this happen. We are committed to preserving, protecting, and strengthening Medicare for this generation and future generations.

ARBITRARY CUTS IN MEDICARE ARE IMPRUDENT

(Mr. DOYLE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DOYLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on behalf of our communities, hospitals, and the health of today's and tomorrow's senior citizens. If we are to bring about Medicare reform which will prove to be truly beneficial, we must first reach a consensus that reforms must achieve specified goals without creating new, more difficult problems.

In the Pittsburgh area alone, there are seven hospitals which would face almost certain shutdown as a result of these proposed cuts. It is neither prudent nor logical to make devastating cuts to Medicare in such an arbitrary fashion. The sound-thinking, hard-working people of western Pennsylvania and across this country will tell you that putting the cart before the horse will get Medicare nowhere fast.

A recent national poll shows that 72 percent of the American public oppose Medicare cuts being made to pay for tax breaks. One has to question how making major cuts to Medicare in part to fund tax breaks could be construed by anyone as fiscally conservative.

I urge my colleagues to oppose these ill-conceived and reckless cuts which not only shake the current foundation, but cause irreparable damage to the future stability of the Medicare system.

ACT NOW TO SAVE MEDICARE, NOT LATER

(Mr. TIAHRT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TIAHRT. Mr. Speaker, the liberals are continuing their scare campaign against the seniors of our country, telling them that Republicans are going to take away their Medicare benefits. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the liberals sound like they want to change the name from Medicare to MediScare.

But I would like to tell you something: I like Medicare, I like providing seniors with crucial medical security. And let me tell you what else I like. I like the idea of Medicare lasting a long, long time, so that future generations will also enjoy medical security.

But the President's Board of Trustees on Medicare tells us the system is going bankrupt in 7 years. Unless we act now, the future looks bleak.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell my liberal colleagues, let us forget the MediScare tactics. Let us channel our energy into something productive. Work with us to save Medicare, and please stop scaring our senior Americans.

WE NEED SPECIFICS ON CHANGES IN MEDICARE

(Mr. DOGGETT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, I believe it was old Will Rogers who said all I know is what I read in the papers, and were he around today, he would have a great deal in common with the seniors and the people who care about seniors, who are concerned about Medicare.

Because you see, all that our Republican colleagues have had to say about their specific plan to change and alter and reform and refine Medicare is that they think that ought to be done. If American seniors or Will Rogers were to have read the Times on Monday, they would have learned one of the specifics of this particular secret plan, that the Republicans think that Medicare beneficiaries should be discouraged from buying insurance to cover what Medicare does not cover already.

The Republicans evidently believe that MediGap coverage insulates patients from the cost of care; in essence, that our seniors are not paying enough for the care that they receive today.

We have had two Members this morning come up and talk about Medicare. They have failed to outline one specific change. They should be talking about MediScare, because they are scared to death to tell the American people how they are going to increase the cost of Medicare to every senior in this land.

DURBIN HARASS-THE-TOBACCO-FARMER AMENDMENT

(Mr. CHAMBLISS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CHAMBLISS. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to oppose what I call the Durbin harass-the-tobacco-farmer amendment to the Agriculture appropriations bill. Having lived in Georgia's farm belt all my adult life, I understand farm programs. Representing the 10th largest tobacco producing district in the country, I understand the importance of the tobacco program to family farmers in my State and across this country.

Now there is a big difference between improving farm programs and harassing farm families. The Durbin amendment is clearly downright harassment of tobacco farm families.

It does not improve the program, it strangles the farmers who participate. For example, if the Durbin amendment passes, the farmer would not have in-

formation on the safest use of chemicals and he would not benefit from his required participation in the crop insurance program.

But the Durbin amendment goes farther. In fact, it would not just affect the farmer, it would affect us all. This provision has the potential to prevent a buy-out of the program which could cost the taxpayers of this country an unbelievable \$1 billion.

If you do not want to throw a blindsided knockout punch to family farmers and to rural districts of America then I urge you to vote "no" on the Durbin amendment.

MEDICARE CUTS TO FUND TAX BREAKS

(Mrs. SCHROEDER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, indeed there is a MediScare, and there is a MediScare because the seniors know the truth about what is happening. They know that the new Republican majority has found this little piggy bank, this little piggy bank that had "Medicare Trust Fund" written on it, and they have crossed out "Trust Fund" and they are not using the Medicare piggy bank to pay for the crown jewel of their contract.

What is the crown jewel of their contract? Tax breaks for people who make over \$350,000 a year. Seniors think that is unfair, when they also hear that Medicare is going broke. Let me tell you how much faster it is going to go broke if you keep using it as a piggy bank to pay for tax cuts.

When you look at the Medicare tax cut and you look at what it is going to cost to give everybody who makes more than \$350,000 a year a \$20,000 a year per person tax cut, it almost looks identical.

That is why there is MediScare, and they ought to absolutely be believing there is a MediScare. We ought to stop it.

TAX CUTS AND TAX INCREASES HAVE NO IMPACT ON MEDICARE TRUST FUND

(Mr. HOKE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, I think that the Members on the other side of the aisle do not understand how Medicare is funded. It is funded by a 1.45-percent payroll tax that is levied on employees and matched by employers, and if that tax is not paid, it will not be funded at all. It does not come from the general revenues of the Federal Government, it comes from a trust fund.

It does not matter if we raise one penny of taxes other than the 1.45 percent. It does not matter if we raise those or if we cut them. It has no impact whatsoever. The trust fund will go bankrupt completely in 7 years, regardless of what we do with those taxes. So