

"Gentlemen, I fear we have awakened a sleeping giant and filled him with a terrible resolve."

If this sneak attack on Medicare passes tomorrow, the American people will again be filled with a terrible resolve and they will know how to repay the attackers.

RENEWING MEDICARE COMMITMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BUNN of Oregon). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oklahoma [Mr. WATTS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. I yield to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. KINGSTON. We are trying to elevate this debate and I just heard that the Republican Medicare plan is the same as the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. I really believe you owe my father, a World War II veteran, and most Medicare recipients an apology for such a statement. I am offended by it. I think the veterans of America are offended by that.

Mr. NADLER. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. WATTS of Oklahoma. No, I will not yield, Mr. Speaker. I have only got 5 minutes and I have got to get up in the morning, so I want to get my 5 minutes out of the way.

Mr. Speaker, I believe the people of the Fourth District of Oklahoma sent me here to Washington to work for what I believe in and talk about what I believe and since coming to Washington in January, I think that I have been doing just that. But tonight I would like to change pace and talk for a moment about what I do not believe.

First I do not believe that there is a single Member of this body who does not understand how important Medicare is to his or her older constituents.

Second, I do not believe there is a single Member of this body who does not understand that the Medicare system is going to run out of money if serious reforms are not enacted.

Finally, I do not believe there is a single Member of this body who would craft a bill to cast a vote that places the health care of America's senior citizens in jeopardy.

In 1965, the 89th Congress made a commitment to older Americans when it enacted the Medicare Program. At that time, health care for the elderly became part of our Nation's basic social contract with her citizens.

Today with Medicare facing bankruptcy, that commitment is in serious jeopardy. Tomorrow we have the opportunity to do something about that. We have the opportunity to renew our commitment to older Americans and an opportunity to revive a Medicare Program that is seriously in danger of default.

The plan to save Medicare that will be considered on the floor of the House

tomorrow is a responsible and desperately needed measure that addresses the serious financial problems facing the Medicare Program.

The rhetoric has run high here in the Chamber on the subject of Medicare but I ask the American people to stop and think for a moment. Every single Member who has worked on drafting these reforms and every single Member who supports these reforms has constituents, family, and friends who will be affected by the actions that we take.

I have heard Members in this Chamber say the reforms that we are proposing will be cataclysmic for our constituents. I have heard these reforms will be a monumental failure. I have heard these reforms will destroy the medical care system that we have put in place for our Nation's senior citizens.

I do not believe it, Mr. Speaker. I do not believe it, because it simply is not true. The Members who support these much needed reforms represent tens of millions of senior citizens who vote, who work on our campaigns, who trust us to do what is right. More than that, many of these golden-agers are our parents. Each of us takes that trust very seriously. That is why we have crafted a bill that guarantees that older Americans will have a viable and secure Medicare Program now and in the future.

Furthermore, we also have to work to preserve Medicare to the next generation, those baby boomers who are currently watching this debate and will fund this program until their retirement. It makes no sense to do otherwise.

I urge my colleagues to support the plan to save Medicare and maintain the contract we signed 30 years ago with America's senior citizens.

VOTE AGAINST REPUBLICAN MEDICARE BILL

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

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to vote against the Medicare bill tomorrow.

I am a senior citizen. I understand the issues in this bill, and I want to say to you, much of it is mendacity, in that what has happened here is that the senior citizens of this country are being sold a bill of goods and it is not right. Do not think that they are crazy. They are sophisticated. They understand that they are not getting full treatment here. They understand that they will not be able to get the high quality of care that they are getting now.

We could not bring a chart in front of every one of them here and prove to them that they are going to get the same quality of care when this bill passes, if it does, that they are getting now. So they know better.

The so-called Medicare Preservation Act of 1995 raises more questions than

it answers. The Republican plan is really not tough on waste, fraud and abuse because first of all it fails to really criminalize waste and fraud in the bill, and it does not give the high quality of care that I just talked about.

The burden of proof should not be placed on the Government, but it is in this bill. In terms of knowing why the Republican leadership raises premiums for the elderly at the same time that it makes it easier to rip off the Medicare system, I cannot understand.

One of their own Members here in this article from the Washington Times, a Republican ex-prosecutor upset by handling of the program's abuse, and I quote, he said here that I support the GOP Medicare reform generally but the fraud and abuse provisions are woefully inadequate. It fails to criminalize Medicare fraud, it raises the threshold of proof necessary to convict a doctor, hospital or other care providers under Federal anti-kickback statutes.

It is important that we know, that seniors know what is going on, they are aware of these things and we must be sure to keep saying it.

My constituents want to know why the Republican leadership bill will cut Medicare payments to hospitals that serve the poor. For years and years I worked in the Florida legislature to be sure that a proportionate share was given to those hospitals who serve the poor.

My constituents want to know why the Republican leadership is cutting Medicare by \$270 billion so that there can be a \$245 billion tax cut. Let me tell you how the Republican leadership plans to increase Medicare premiums will affect a constituent who wrote to me last month. She is 69 years old and her husband is 67. Their monthly income is \$811 from Social Security. She pays a rent of \$475, utilities of \$150, and insurance of \$98. That leaves the couple \$88 a month in cash along with \$96 in food stamps for everything else, for food, for clothing and for all medical expenses that they have to pay out of their own pocket. She has cancer and her husband has diabetes and cancer. The Republican leadership bill says that the part B Medicare premium which under current law would be \$43 per month next year will rise to \$54 a month next year and continue to rise until it reaches \$87 a month 7 years from now.

How is my constituent going to pay that? An extra \$11 a month next year may not seem like a lot of money to the people getting those big tax cuts but let me tell you, it is a lot of money to an elderly person. If you do not believe it, just talk to them, that has only \$88 a month for food, clothing, and prescription drugs.

Why does the Republican leadership want to raise Medicare premiums at the same time it is retreating in the war against Medicare fraud and abuse? That is what my constituents want to know. One of them called my attention