TAKE A STAND NEAR FORDYCE, HUNTERS TOLD

Need a place to hunt after being tossed out of your stand on a federal wildlife refuge?

Mayor William Lyon of Fordyce has just the place for you.

Call Fordyce City Hall at 352–2198 and a friendly employee will arrange for you to hunt at one of the many deer camps operating in Dallas County. There's no charge for the service.

Lyon said Friday there are an estimated 1,000 deer camps within 50 miles of Fordyce.

''I read in the Democrat-Gazette about what they had done to those people,'' Lyon said of an article in Wednesday's newspaper about hunters being told to leave the federal refuges. ''I thought how I would feel if I was a teen-ager going hunting with my father. I thought about how my grandsons would feel.''

The partial shutdown of the federal government has resulted in the closings of seven national wildlife refuge in the state and the displacement of many hunters.

Lyons said he knows most of the people running deer camps in the county and can easily put hunters in touch with them.

It's probably going to create some problems with a lot of moving around, but we are willing to help,'' Lyon said. It's possible we might find some good people that would like to come back and pull some industries down here.''

Joe Pennington, 55 of Fordyce leases land for his deer camp and said he mainly hunts within a five-mile radius of town.

''There's not room for a whole abundance of people,'' he said. ''But I have some spots where I can put a few people. There are a few others that will take a few for a day or two.

''It's a goodwill gesture,'' Pennington said. ''Most sportsmen try to get along.''

''We think it's very generous what the mayor has done,'' said Joe Mosby, spokesman for the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. ''We're tickled to death by it.''

Mosby said the closing of federal refugees will not affect the majority of hunters in the state. ''But the refuges are very popular,'' he said. ''Those hunters have a real good chance of getting a deer in the refuges.''

Lyon said his offer is a result of local officials trying to build on the momentum of their successful Fall Hunting Festival, held Oct. 27. Fordyce Chamber of Commerce President Jim Philips, County Judge Troy Bradley and Lyon have been meeting to discuss ways to promote Fordyce as ''the Hunting Capital of Arkansas,'' Lyon said.

For this effort, we congratulate and honor Mayor Lyons. Perhaps many of us in Congress can learn from his dedication and ability to ensure—despite bureaucratic obstacles—that our constituents are well-served.

MEDICARE REFORM

HON. J. DENNIS HASTERT

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, December 19, 1995

Mr. HASTERT. Mr. Speaker, the following op-ed by Pamela G. Bailey ran in the Wall Street Journal on December 19, 1995. As the debate over Medicare intensifies, I commend Ms. Bailey's op-ed to my colleagues:

SEVEN DOLLARS OF SEPARATION

(By Pamela G. Bailey)

The Medicare debate reached a new low last week, if such a thing is any longer possible, as the AFL-CIO uncorked a giant media and grassroots campaign to attack 55 House members who support the Republican on Draconian GOP ''cuts'' in Medicare and suggest that there is a huge difference between the Republican plan and the one supported by President Clinton.

What you would never guess from the AFL-CIO campaign is that the division between the two sides comes down to roughly $7 a month in Medicare premiums. Combined with other reforms, the higher premium for seniors proposed by Republicans will save today's average seven-year-old more than $140,000 in income taxes over the course of this working life. Congress wants to protect our children from this additional tax hit—after all, they'll already be paying $300,000 in Medicare payroll taxes over their lifetime. But the president is willing to trade these taxes on our children for a $7-per-month break for seniors.

Despite this superficial difference, the president's new budget has moved to a near embrace of the Republican position on Medicare. Like the Republicans, Mr. Clinton wants to open a failed government program to the choices of the marketplace. And with notable exceptions, his overall budget numbers are within talking distance of the GOP's. It couldn't have come a moment too soon.

As most people have heard, Medicare Part A—the mandatory, payroll-tax-funded program that pays insurance costs for retirees' hospital, home health, nursing and hospice services—is hurtling toward insolvency and effective shutdown by 2002. And costs for Medicare Part B—the voluntary insurance program that pays doctor, lab, and equipment fees out of general federal revenues and beneficiary premiums—have been rising far faster than the rate of inflation for many years. In its present form, Medicare is quite simply unsustainable, either for the taxpayers who finance it or for the elderly Americans who depend on it. Not much controversy there. And neither, despite all the political noise, is there much controversy over what to do about it.

Congress's plan to preserve Medicare and restrain its costs involves $1.65 trillion in spending over the next seven years. The president's current plan forecasts $1.68 trillion in spending during the same period—a $30 billion, or less than 2%, difference. Both proposals involve better-than-inflation increase in Medicare spending on every enrolled retiree; the Republican budget allows a 62% jump in total spending (to $7,101 per beneficiary per year), for example. And where the basic structure of the program is concerned, the White House and congressional budgets mirror one another in nearly every essential respect. Except one.

Congress spreads its necessary Medicare savings across every category of program expenditure. The Republican plan brakes projected spending growth on hospitals, doctors, home health providers, nursing homes, lab tests, and medical equipment. And it asks retirees—America's wealthiest age group—to make their own, modest contribution, in the national interest, to the program that benefits them alone. How modest? In the year 2002, at the point where the two competing Medicare proposals most sharply diverge, Congress would have beneficiaries pay a monthly Part B premium $7 higher than the administration plan envisions.

This is a very small amount of money with very large potential consequences. If the president's current veto holds, and Medicare's structure is left unreformed, its Board of Trustees reports that a steep payroll tax increase will be required to pay for future medical services. The current rate, 2.9%, shared evenly between employees and their companies, will necessarily more than double.

Today's first or second-grader, who enters the labor force in 2010 at age 22, and earns average wages until retiring in 2053, will pay $450,314 over his working lifetime in Medicare payroll taxes. And by the same accounting assuming revenues needed to keep Medicare in long-term balance, this hypothetical worker will pay over $200,000 more in lifetime payroll and income taxes under the president's plan—taxes that are unnecessary under the Medicare reform endorsed by Congress. More than two-thirds of this tax difference, or $140,691, is directly attributable to that $7 monthly Part B premium increase.

Undeterred by these undeniable facts, the AFL-CIO is sending a million pieces of mail into the districts of its 55 targeted congressmen, placing 500,000 phone calls, handing out leaflets and staging rallies—all designed to punish these elected officials for approving fictitious ''massive cuts in Medicare'' when they voted for the Republican budget. The labor federation has spent more than $1 million to put individualized television ads on the air against 22 of these House members. Each spot, over video of a worried elderly woman, ominously (and dishonestly) reports that ''he voted to cut Medicare.'' But no one has voted to cut Medicare this year.

With a provision entirely unrelated to the push for a balanced budget—this treasured program must be fixed and saved whether the budget is balanced or not—Congress has voted to spare the grandchildren of current and future Medicare beneficiaries enough money in taxes to pay for four expensive years of college, or purchase a first home. Is there a grandparent in America who would not pay $7 a month for that?

Find me one, and I'll eat my hat.