

working in modest income, they can retire at very much higher incomes. The bill would also call for a loan of \$900 billion from the general fund to Social Security to ease in the transition as we go into some of these private accounts. That loan is paid back over the years.

When I introduced my first bill in 1994 and 1996, it was not necessary to borrow that money because the surplus coming in in those early years was so much greater. Now the surplus coming in from Social Security is declining; and, of course, as we noted on the one chart, it is going to run out.

The program, the trust fund continues. The Retirement Security Act would allow workers to create on a voluntary basis accounts funded from their payroll taxes. It would be in their name; so if they die before the age of 65, they own the money. The money would go to their heirs and their kids. The accounts would start at 2.5 percent of income and would reach 8 percent of income by 2075. Workers would own the money in their accounts. It is their money. Investments would be limited and widely diversified and investment providers would be subject to government oversight. The government would supplement the accounts of low-income workers making less than \$35,000 a year to ensure that the lower income workers build up the kind of equity that is going to allow them to retire with much higher incomes.

The kind of spending that we have had in Congress means higher taxes are coming, maybe not in the next year or two, but eventually. The same Congress that could not bring itself to add a few real reforms to Medicare in a gigantic benefit expansion bill is not likely to cut benefits to the degree necessary to head off financial crisis. I take some comfort in what is happening this year from a new willingness among many Members of the Republican Conference to tighten our line on spending. And though some Members express concerns that maybe you should not have cuts in an election year, the overwhelming majority of Republicans agree that we have got to cut down on spending, we have got to have some kind of PAYGO rules that put some teeth, if you will, into assuring that we are going to limit spending. Joining with colleagues who share my concern with government overspending, we are going to reimpose those caps that we had in the 1980s and through the surplus period of the late 1990s.

Another aspect of the solution is improving the honesty of government accounting. I would like to mention, Mr. Speaker, a bill that I am introducing to require the CBO, the Congressional Budget Office, and OMB to include unfunded liabilities, the \$73.5 trillion that we mentioned, in their budget projections. So it is legislation that is going to make us more aware of the fact that we are making more promises than we can afford.

To put \$73.5 trillion in perspective, it amounts to 7 years of the gross domestic product of the United States, more than 30 times the President's proposed budget for this year; and it means that with 290 million Americans divided into that \$73.5 trillion, every man, woman and child has a responsibility for more than \$250,000. Some people have said that we should not worry so much about unfunded liability because it can be wiped out by reforms. I think that is the challenge. Are we going to do reforms this election year? Or are we going to put off those reforms until maybe after the election and try to do them next year?

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Congress and the President I think can redeem their record on spending to a large degree if they push hard for Social Security reform after this election. But it remains to be seen whether we will take on that fight, and it will be a fight because steeply progressive taxes and big government have been combined to form a powerful electoral bloc.

Here again that bloc is 50 percent of earners in this country pay less than 1 percent of the income tax; and, as with health care, somehow everybody has got to participate in the taxes that run this government if they are going to look at their demands for increased government and know somehow that it affects their particular pocketbook. The same is true with Medicare and Medicaid. Somehow the reasonableness of those that are frugal in demanding additional health care need to have some kind of reward and those that are wasteful need to have some kind of scolding.

The old system, of course, before Medicare and Medicaid was that one worked hard and they earned money and they wanted to save that money, so they were very careful how they spent that money for health care and they asked the doctor, look, how much is this going to cost and why are you charging me this much on the bill? But when there are third-party payers, when government is paying the full bill, it is easy not to be as conscientious in demanding accountability from health care providers.

Empires decline when they fail to act on fundamental problems; and I wonder at times, Mr. Speaker, if we are not too distracted by endless scandals and horse-race politics of our media culture to grapple with what is best for our country. Too often, politics get reduced entirely to who benefits and who pays, but there have been times when I have been both surprised and inspired by the American people, by the people in this Chamber and the Senate and the White House who say we have got to come to grips with real problems that are facing this country. Despite the fact that it would sometimes seem easy to say, well, let us tax the rich and spend more money for the less rich and divide the wealth, I think it is important to re-

member that this country was built on a foundation and a motivation where those individuals that worked hard and saved, that tried and invested and that were careful with their spending ended up better off than those that did not.

So as we come with legislation that sometimes on the surface seems attractive to divide the wealth, I think we have got to be very careful; and this gives me help and hope.

As Lincoln concluded at Gettysburg "that this Nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth," I think he was right because we are going to come to grips with these problems.

It is just important that the American people this year remind their elected representatives. In fact, I say to the American people when they go to debates to ask those individuals running for President, those individuals running for the U.S. Senate, those individuals running for the U.S. House of Representatives, "What bill have you sponsored or signed on to to save Social Security and to save Medicare?" Do not let them give a lot of fast talk, but ask exactly what are they going to do to deal with this huge unfunded liability that this country is facing, where promises have far exceeded our ability to pay for them.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

By unanimous consent, leave of absence was granted to:

Mr. CULBERSON (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today until 5:00 p.m. on account of medical reasons.

Mr. HULSHOF (at the request of Mr. DELAY) for today and March 31 on account of family reasons.

SPECIAL ORDERS GRANTED

By unanimous consent, permission to address the House, following the legislative program and any special orders heretofore entered, was granted to:

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. EMANUEL) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material):

Mr. EMANUEL, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio, for 5 minutes, today.

Ms. NORTON, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. DAVIS of Illinois, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. HINCHEY, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. CONYERS, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. GREEN of Texas, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. PALLONE, for 5 minutes, today.

Mr. STRICKLAND, for 5 minutes, today.

(The following Members (at the request of Mr. HENSARLING) to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material):

Mrs. JOHNSON of Connecticut, for 5 minutes, March 31.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, for 5 minutes, March 31 and April 1.