

Currently, there are 37 million Americans enrolled in Medicare, and 205,000 of them are New Mexicans. Today, 99.1 percent of all Americans over the age of 65 have health insurance coverage, primarily due to Medicare. The poverty rate for aged Americans has fallen by nearly 50 percent since Medicare's inception, and this is largely attributable to the fact that seniors receive effective preventive and acute health care at reasonable costs.

We must accomplish the difficult task of extending the life of Medicare, and it should not interfere with our commitment to balance the budget. But we also must examine the effects of current proposals carefully. In our rush to achieve ambitious goals, we cannot overlook the economic and social importance of adequate health care for seniors and the continued viability of local hospitals.

I commend to you the following article, written by Dr. Lyle Hagan of my district, which outlines the serious impacts current proposals will bring about.

STORM LOOMING FOR MEDICARE

(By Dr. R. Lyle Hagan)

On July 28, 1995 Medicare will celebrate its 30th birthday. As we all know, Medicare is a U.S. Government program that provides medical care for the nation's elderly. In addition Medicaid—a government administered program, provides medical services to the poor; financed jointly by Federal and State governments.

During the past several weeks, Congress has been deeply involved in cutting costs in all areas of government administration. Congress has established a Budget resolution for the fiscal year 1996 (FY 96).

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) fully supports deficit reduction, but it also believes that deficit reduction should be fair and balanced. The (FY 96) Budget Resolution proposes to take nearly half of the deficit reduction in the next seven years out of Medicare and Medicaid. In both programs these are the largest cuts ever proposed.

In 1995, the average older beneficiary will spend about \$2,750 out-of-pocket to cover the cost of medicare premiums, deductibles, coinsurance and the cost of services not covered by Medicare.

Under the Budget Resolution (FY 96), an average beneficiary would end up spending a total of about \$29,000 over seven years—an increase of about \$3,400. To achieve the medicare spending reductions in these proposals, costs that are currently paid by the Medicare program would probably be shifted to Medicare beneficiaries in the form of higher premiums, deductibles and coinsurance.

These could include: a higher medicare Part B premium; an increase in the annual Part B deductible to \$150, indexed to program growth; a new 20 percent home health insurance; a new 20 percent coinsurance for skilled nursing facility care; a new 20 percent lab coinsurance and a new income-related premium for higher-income beneficiaries.

All of these options have been under review in the Congress this year. Currently, the Part B premium intended to approximate 25 percent of Part B costs. In 1995, the premium is \$46.10 per month, \$553.20 annually. It is estimated to grow to \$60.80 per month, \$729.60 annually by 2002. The premium is deducted from most beneficiaries' social security checks. The remaining 75 percent of Part B costs are paid from general revenues.

Under the proposal by FY 96, the Budget resolution could substantially increase the Part B premium paid by medicare beneficiaries thereby shifting higher health care costs to medicare beneficiaries. Under the

proposal, the premium is estimated to jump to \$97.70 per month, or \$1,172.40 annually by 2002. That is \$442.80 more than the beneficiary would pay under current law. Over the next seven years, most medicare beneficiaries would pay an estimated additional \$1,590 for the Part B premium alone.

The FY Budget resolution includes the largest Medicaid reductions in the history of the program—\$182 billion in savings over the next seven years. In the year 2002 alone, the budget proposal would reduce projected federal medicaid spending by \$54 billion, a reduction of about 30 percent below what the government estimates it will cost to run the program delivering the same services and benefits that it does today.

Medicaid is the health and long-term care safety net for vulnerable children, older and disabled Americans. More than four million older Americans depend on medicaid for coverage of preventive care, prescription drugs, nursing home and home community-based long-term care. In addition, more than 15 million low-income children are covered by Medicaid.

How individual states would respond to the proposed cuts would vary by state, but some things are clear. It is unlikely that states would raise taxes or shift money to make up for the federal reductions. According to estimates by the Urban Institute, in the year 2002, more than eight million Americans could lose their medicaid coverage as a result of these proposed reductions.

Senior citizens may ask their Senator or Representative in Congress about Medicare and Medicaid cuts and how they will affect their future health and medical care.

INTRODUCTION OF THE ERISA CHILD ABUSE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

HON. PATRICIA SCHROEDER

OF COLORADO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 28, 1995

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the ERISA Child Abuse Accountability Act. This bill is a natural extension of legislation that I introduced last session, the Child Abuse Accountability Act, which Congress passed and President Clinton signed into law, Public Law 103-358.

The ERISA Child Abuse Accountability Act amends the Employment Retirement Income Security Act [ERISA] to allow victims to collect monetary awards from their abuser's pension. As a result of last year's legislation, victims of child abuse can now collect from an abuser's pension if it is a Federal pension. The ERISA Child Abuse Accountability Act allows victims to collect from private sector pensions as well.

It is vital that we, as a nation, dedicate ourselves to protect the welfare of our children and guarantee that anyone who commits a crime against them is held accountable. That is what the ERISA Child Abuse Accountability Act does.

The children who survive abuse face a lifetime of scars, both physical and mental. Some of these survivors turn to our court system to hold their abusers civilly accountable for their crimes. They endure traumatic trials, reliving the years of torment in order to hold their abusers responsible. Tragically, vindication by a court is only the beginning of the struggle for countless victims. Even after a court finds the abuser guilty and awards the survivor com-

pensation, our laws prevent satisfying a court order with money from a pension.

This bill ends this injustice by creating a right to payment to satisfy a child abuse judgment. Under current law, private pensions are already accessible for child support and for spousal payments. This bill adds child abuse compensation as an obligation that must be met.

We hear a lot of talk in this body about protecting children and victims. But the fact is, there are laws that Congress has passed that protect abusers and prevent justice for victims. If we do not change those laws, our words ring hollow. I urge Members to support this bill.

DEPARTMENTS OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996

SPEECH OF

HON. JACK REED

OF RHODE ISLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, July 27, 1995

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2099) making appropriations for the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and for sundry independent agencies, boards, commissions, corporations, and offices for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purposes:

Mr. REED. Mr. Chairman, it is with great concern for veterans, seniors, the poor and our environment that I rise in opposition to the VA, HUD and Independent Agencies Appropriation bill for fiscal year 1996.

This bill before us is an ill-conceived, mean-spirited attack on the most vulnerable citizens in America. While those may sound like harsh words, here are the harsh figures; a 50-percent reduction in funding to fight homelessness, \$400 million less for section 8 operating costs and a \$1.2 billion cut in modernization funds for public housing. For veterans, there is \$250 million less than what the VA said is necessary to maintain the current service level and quality for medical care and \$500 million less in administrative and construction costs. The EPA budget is cut by a third, resulting in no new cleanups and no funding for the safe drinking water loan fund.

Under this bill, Rhode Island would lose \$7.7 million in rehabilitation and repair funds and \$2 million that maintains 10,401 public housing units. In addition, our State, which last year assisted 4,910 people who came to emergency and domestic violence shelters, will lose nearly \$2.6 million needed to assist these people. Ironically, if this bill passes, more people will be homeless and need this type of help.

I am also afraid that the news for Rhode Island's veterans is equally discouraging. While some programs nationwide have been increased, veterans in southeastern Rhode Island will again wait for needed improvements. In 1990 the VA bought a building to consolidate VA services in Rhode Island. Now, that building is unoccupied and our vets are waiting for the promised consolidation. Unfortunately, because this consolidation is not funded, the Government will continue to pay rent

in downtown Providence, instead of cutting costs and consolidating the VA offices as planned.

Lastly, I am disappointed with what this bill does to our environment. This bill contains language that would limit the EPA's authority to enforce major environmental laws such as the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Safe Drinking Act. With the inclusion of this language, the Republican leadership has essentially gutted the last 25 years of environmental progress.

It will become harder for organizations in my State to continue the job of cleaning up our environment and protecting our health when virtually all funding to do so will be diminished. In fact, Rhode Island would lose \$2.4 million compared to the President's proposal to finance wastewater projects, \$9 million for loans to provide safe drinking water, and \$674,000 to address polluted runoff. The loss of crucial funding to financing clean water infrastructure threatens both the protection of public health in Rhode Island and industries like shellfishing, boating, and tourism that are dependent on clean water.

While I understand the need to reduce the deficit, I do not believe we should place a disproportionate share on the backs of those who can least afford it. Unfortunately, that is what the Republicans have done in this bill. And this is not the first time. Just 4 months ago, the rescission bill attacked low income and elderly people by cutting money for section 8, rental assistance and homeownership initiatives. H.R. 2009 marks the second time this year that our poor, elderly, and disabled have been asked to make sacrifices in the name of deficit reduction. These sacrifices seem much higher than what other people have been asked to contribute.

I would like my colleagues to ask themselves why these cuts are so severe. Why have we decided to continue to invest less and less for those who have no roof over their head? Well, my colleagues, one answer is the space station. Some may argue that housing programs need reform, and therefore, they should be cut. But Mr. Chairman, if the same logic holds, why should we spend billions on a space station with innumerable design changes, cost increases, and failures?

Mr. Speaker, this bill's priorities are wrong and I see no reason to support it. I ask my colleagues to join me in opposing this misguided legislation.

TRIBUTE TO REV. W.L.
PATTERSON

HON. VERNON J. EHLERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, July 28, 1995

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to recognize the efforts and achievements of an outstanding man from my hometown of Grand Rapids, MI. Rev. W.L. Patterson of the True Light Baptist Church has given 41 years of unselfish civic and spiritual service to the residents of our community.

Reverend Patterson was born and raised in Arkansas, and in 1954 was called to the pastorate of the True Light Baptist Church. He is known throughout our community as a man of

great integrity, ambition, and leadership. His work and dedication have helped improve the quality of life for a countless number of people.

Since being ordained 56 years ago, Reverend Patterson has continually served as a church pastor, and dedicated the last 41 years to the True Light Baptist Church. He has accomplished many outstanding services for the church such as building a new church, purchasing two parsonages, and purchasing property for the church, in addition to serving the spiritual needs of his parishioners.

Reverend Patterson has conducted daily commentaries and has appealed to those in need of prayer and counseling over the airwaves of WKWM radio. Reverend Patterson has used the power of the radio medium to deliver prayers and worship for those who are unable to attend services in person. His radio worship services have given him the distinction of being one of the first pastors to use this form of communication to deliver his message.

His involvement with the community extends beyond the pulpit of the church. He was instrumental in forming the Ambassadors Club, an organized Bible study class that later became a community service group. He also founded the Kennedy Day Care Center which served the youth of our community for more than 20 years. People with substance abuse problems have also benefited from Patterson's caring ways. His Operation Faith program was established to help those with substance abuse problems deal with their dilemmas through alternatives other than drugs and alcohol.

His skills and leadership have also been tapped by numerous organizations in the community. He has served as a member of the Kent Skills Committee on Relocation and he has also been involved as a board member of the Salvation Army's Genesis House. He has also held membership in the Grand Rapids chapters of the Urban League and the NAACP.

Not only has Reverend Patterson blessed the lives of many during his years of service, he has also been blessed himself by a wonderful family. Providing loving support for this dedicated man have been his wife Ruth White Patterson and his children Willie Patterson, Jr., Allena Ruth Cross, Rev. Irma Jean Jones, Ralph Patterson, Rev. H. Calvin Patterson, Barbara Brazil, Thedosa Baker, and his deceased son, Walter Patterson.

Mr. Speaker, I have summed up just a sampling of the many accomplishments and achievements of this remarkable and dedicated man. It is with great pleasure and privilege that I take this time to honor Reverend Patterson for all of his work in helping provide a better way of life for those he has come in contact with.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 1996

SPEECH OF

HON. CAROLYN B. MALONEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 25, 1995

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union had under

consideration the bill (H.R. 2002) making appropriations for the Department of Transportation and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purposes:

Mrs. MALONEY. Mr. Chairman, I rise to articulate my objections to the Transportation appropriations bill.

In my view, H.R. 2002, next year's funding bill, takes our Nation in the wrong direction on transportation policy. This is particularly true for New York City, because the bill imposes devastating cuts on the mass transit budget.

The bill passed by the House increases funding for our highway system by over \$800 million while at the same time decreasing funding for mass transit by \$500 million—a 20 percent reduction over last year's budget.

The impact of these cuts on New York City will be dramatic. Currently, the city receives \$87.5 million in mass transit operating assistance funding. This will be slashed by over \$38 million—an incredible 44 percent cut. The city estimates that it will lose another \$40.7 million in Federal capital assistance funding.

In addition to these general budget cuts, I'm particularly displeased that the appropriators removed \$40 million in funding to renovate Penn Station that was in the President's budget. Without this funding, we will be unable to continue with our efforts to replace the aging central train station in New York with the refurbished station that our city and the millions of passengers so desperately need.

In addition, over \$30 million in cuts to Amtrak will reduce the ability of our citizens to travel up and down the heavily used east coast routes between Washington, New York, and Boston.

For those of us who represent urban and suburban communities, it is clear that mass transit must be a priority, and that we should be investing in services and technologies which will make our buses and trains run more efficiently and more safely. Mass transit moves millions of Americans to and from their jobs each day. It is also the only transportation alternative available to seniors on fixed incomes and students getting to school. Under the bill, subway and bus fares would most likely increase dramatically, effectively putting travel out of the reach of those who most need it.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to express my support for the objectives of my colleagues from the Philadelphia area, Mr. FOGLIETTA and Mr. FOX, who sought to offer amendments to restore mass transit operating subsidies. In the end, however, I could not vote for their amendment because, rather than shifting money from the highway fund, it took money from the Federal aviation authority. With New York's airports in dire need of assistance, I could not in good conscience vote to help one important element of our infrastructure by harming another.

As this bill moves on to the Senate and then to the President's desk, I will fight hard to restore as much funding for mass transit as possible.