

Let me start by reviewing why these changes are necessary. Then I want to talk about some of these changes.

The trustees of Medicare, four of them appointed by President Clinton, three of them Cabinet Secretaries, warned America in their April annual report that the Medicare part A trust fund that pays hospital bills will go bankrupt by 2002.

Beginning next year, in 1996, for the first time in the history of Medicare, more money will be spent on senior's hospital bills than will come into the trust fund from the payroll taxes that are paid out of the wages of current workers.

If we do nothing, seniors' out-of-pocket costs would continue to climb and Medicare would be bankrupt in 7 years.

If we do nothing and Medicare goes bankrupt, the Government does not have the authority to pay for the hospital bills of any one senior, let alone the 37 million who now depend on it, and the millions more who will need it in the future.

Clearly doing nothing was not a responsible or acceptable option. The problem will not go away—it will only get worse.

Republicans stepped up to the challenge of saving Medicare because Medicare is a vital program that is too important for politics as usual. That is why we began in the spring and have continued throughout year to hold hearings here in Washington. In fact, between the House and the Senate there have been 50 hearings.

More importantly, we have held meetings back at home with seniors, doctors, nurses, hospital administrators, insurance companies, advocacy groups such as the American Association of Retired Persons—AARP.

Based on what the people in western Maryland told me and what other members learned from their constituents, we developed the Medicare Preservation Act.

The Medicare Preservation Act is based on two simple, but effective principles: First, choice for seniors, and second, competition among health care providers.

Choice and competition always do two things in our free enterprise system: Lower costs, and improve quality. That is what the Medicare Preservation Act is about. That is what the Medicare Preservation Act will do. It will give seniors the right to choose the health care and health care insurance plan that best meets their needs, not the Government's. It will give seniors the choice between traditional Medicare or new options.

If seniors do nothing, they will keep traditional Medicare. It will preserve seniors' right to keep their current doctor and hospital. I have two special concerns that the Medicare Preservation Act solves.

Rural areas of America, such as western Maryland, will greatly benefit from the new option of provider service net-

works—or PSN's. Provider service networks are collaborative partnerships between hospitals and doctors that will compete against insurance companies. Provider service networks already exist in western Maryland, but they are hampered by unbelievable amounts of redtape.

The unnecessary redtape is eliminated under the Medicare Preservation Act so that doctors and hospitals can concentrate on what they want to do and should do—take care of patients. That is why the Maryland State Medical Society supports the Medicare Preservation Act.

Seniors know that fraud is a big problem in Medicare. The GAO estimates 10 percent or so. The Heritage Foundation estimates up to 20 percent of Medicare costs—that is up to \$32 billion is estimated to be lost to waste, fraud or abuse each year.

For instance, Mr. Charles Hardy of Cumberland, MD, found that Medicare was billed for services for his mother—after she died. The Medicare Preservation Act attacks waste, fraud, and abuse in two ways.

First, it sets up a rebate program that will award people like Mr. Hardy with 10 percent of savings over \$1,000. Mr. Hardy got no reward for being diligent. People like Mr. Hardy deserve a reward for taking the time and trouble to look for and report mistakes they find in Medicare bills. Health care providers need to be aware that people like Mr. Hardy are paying attention.

Second, the new options for seniors that will be created by the Medicare Preservation Act means that doctors and hospitals, health management organizations, insurance companies, and provider service networks will have to compete for senior's business based on quality and price.

The Medicare Preservation Act is a real, honest, practical, long term, solution that will save Medicare because it is based upon the two key advantages that we seniors have.

We are smart because of the accumulated wisdom of our experience.

We have the time to pick the plan that is right for us.

I urge all of my colleagues to join me in supporting the Medicare Preservation Act.

SUPPRESSION OF POLITICAL ADVOCACY AND FREE SPEECH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. SKAGGS] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. SKAGGS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to address for just a few minutes a proposal that is pending in the House that is generally referred to as the Istook amendment or the Istook-McIntosh proposal. What, one may ask, is that about? Well, this is an effort to set up a very, very complicated system for regulating, if one can believe this, regulating and really suppressing polit-

ical speech and political advocacy in this democracy, which is based, of course, on freedom of political speech and association.

There are many, many aspects to this proposal, but it is often masqueraded, anyway, under the guise of ending welfare for lobbyists. And that may sound like a catchy and compelling concept until we realize who it is that we are talking about. This proposal is intended to get at such organizations as the American Red Cross, the United Church of Christ, the YMCA, the Girl Scouts, a whole range of mainstream American charitable and philanthropic organizations that happen, in addition to their regular activities in our communities, to be involved in some fashion or other in the debate and consideration in America of good public policy.

Many of these organizations, as are well known, are involved in a whole range of philanthropic and charitable activities in their communities in their States. They learn about the problems in our society from those activities, and, understandably, they exercise their first amendment rights to communicate those concerns to State and local and Federal policymakers and legislators. This proposal would put limits on what they can do to help us in the Congress or in the State capitals do a better job.

Why? Well, I cannot really answer that question. The proponents of this proposal seem to think that we should go back to a kind of 19th century view of charity, in which the only thing that is legitimate is to feed the poor, house the homeless, do the fundamental good works, which are clearly very, very important. But if they learn something from that, that might help inform Government to do its job better, well, that is out of line.

Mr. Speaker, this reminds me of our colleague from Georgia, Mr. GINGRICH's, comments about wanting to go back to a kind of 19th century orphanage way of dealing with children who do not have the advantages of having both parents at home.

Now, this is being called, this effort to get at the political activities of nonprofits and, for that matter, individuals and businesses that happen to be involved in the political life of this country, going after one of Washington's dirty little secrets; that is that somehow the idea that the YMCA or the Girl Scouts or the American Red Cross might be involved in political advocacy is an anathema.

Mr. Speaker, I think it may also have something to do with wanting to divert attention from one of the real dirty little secrets in town right now, which is the avoidance of dealing with real lobbying reform and real gift reform around this place. We are preoccupied in this proposal, again with, I think, a real diversionary tactic.

When I am home, I at least do not have a lot of people coming up to me saying, "Congressman, I wish you

would rein in the Girl Scouts from being quite so active politically. It is just an outrage." Or commenting about how dangerous it is to American society to have the YMCA involved in the debate about child care.

□ 1315

But while we are off on this tangent, people are being distracted from the fundamental inaction in the House of Representatives on real, central, political reform here in the House; namely, getting to the activities of real lobbyists and their inappropriate ways of trying to influence decisions here through a whole range of extracurricular activities, whether it is gifts or meals or junkets or what have you.

Mr. Speaker, why haven't we taken up that legislation which most Members of the House arrived in January saying ought to be central to our reform agenda around here? Why are we not doing that, rather than messing around with this very, very trivializing and, I think, insulting diversion about wanting to make sure that the Girl Scouts do not have too much say in the political life of this country.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CLINGER). There being no further requests for morning business, pursuant to clause 12, rule I, the House will stand in recess until 2 p.m.

Accordingly (at 1 o'clock and 15 minutes p.m.), the House stood in recess until 2 p.m.

□ 1400

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. RIGGS) at 2 p.m.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Rev. James David Ford, D.D., offered the following prayer:

We pray, gracious God, for a clear vision of ourselves and of the world in which we live and work and have our being. Enable us to see ourselves as we truly are—created in Your image and marked by opportunities to be the people You would have us be—and also aware that we often miss the mark and lose the vision. We know, O God, that if we do not see the heavenly vision and miss the direction for our lives, our steps will wander and we will lose our way. Open our eyes, gracious God, so we see the path to freedom and opportunity and of service to others. This is our earnest prayer. Amen.

JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the last day's proceedings and announced to the House his approval thereof.

Pursuant to clause 1 of rule I, the Journal stands approved.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, pursuant to clause 1, rule I, I demand a vote on agreeing to the Speaker's approval of the Journal.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the Chair's approval of the Journal.

The question was taken; and the Speaker pro tempore announced that the ayes appeared to have it.

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, I object to the vote on the ground that a quorum is not present and make the point of order that a quorum is not present.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 5, rule I, further proceedings on this question are postponed.

The point of no quorum is considered withdrawn.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Ohio [Mr. TRAFICANT] will lead the House in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. TRAFICANT led the Pledge of Allegiance as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

A message from the Senate by Mr. Lundregan, one of its clerks, announced that the Senate had passed with an amendment a bill of the House of the following title:

H.R. 2076. An act making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purposes.

The message also announced that the Senate insists upon its amendment to the bill (H.R. 2076) "An Act making appropriations for the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State, the Judiciary, and related agencies for the fiscal year ending September 30, 1996, and for other purposes", requests a conference with the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints Mr. GREGG, Mr. HATFIELD, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. DOMENICI, Mr. MCCONNELL, Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. COCHRAN, Mr. HOLLINGS, Mr. BYRD, Mr. INOUE, Mr. BUMPERS, Mr. LAUTENBERG, and Mr. KERREY to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

The message also announced that the Senate had passed a bill of the following title, in which the concurrence of the House is requested:

S. 1267. An act to amend the Congressional Award Act to revise and extend authorities for the Congressional Award Board.

The message also announced that the Senate disagrees to the amendments of the House to the bill (S. 641) "An Act to reauthorize the Ryan White CARE Act of 1990, and for other purposes", requests a conference with the House on

the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints Mrs. KASSEBAUM, Mr. JEFFORDS, Mr. FRIST, Mr. KENNEDY, and Mr. DODD, to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

The message also announced that the Senate disagrees to the amendments of the House to the bill (S. 652) "An Act to provide for a pro-competitive, deregulatory national policy framework designed to accelerate rapidly private sector deployment of advanced telecommunications and information technologies and services to all Americans by opening all telecommunications markets to competition, and for other purposes", agrees to a conference asked by the House on the disagreeing votes of the two Houses thereon, and appoints Mr. PRESSLER, Mr. STEVENS, Mr. MCCAIN, Mr. BURNS, Mr. GORTON, Mr. LOTT, Mr. HOLLINGS, Mr. INOUE, Mr. FORD, Mr. EXON, and Mr. ROCKEFELLER, to be the conferees on the part of the Senate.

APPOINTMENT OF CONFeree IN LIEU OF CONFeree ON S. 395, ALASKA POWER ADMINISTRATION ASSET SALE AND TERMINATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair appoints, without objection, Mr. OBERSTAR as a conferee for consideration of House amendment No. 4 for the conference on the bill S. 395 to fill the vacancy resulting from the resignation from the House of the gentleman from California, Mr. Mineta.

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Clerk will notify the Senate of the change in conferees.

ACT NOW TO PRESERVE MEDICARE

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

Mr. LINDER. Mr. Speaker, Medicare is a lot like a 1965 model car. It is comfortable transportation, but it may not always be reliable. The 1965 model lacks the efficiency of the newer cars and is expensive to maintain.

The Medicare Preservation Act would allow folks to have the health care equivalent of a new car with air-conditioning, better gas mileage, or other options of their choice. The technology has improved and the new safety features are important. Of course, those who prefer the classic car are welcome to keep it.

I urge the American people and particularly our senior citizens to be informed consumers. Do not be hastily swayed by the advertising of AARP and other groups which depend on Government spending and bureaucracy for their livelihoods.

When individuals in my district in Georgia understand the facts of the Medicare crisis they soon realize that the Medicare Preservation Act is the best solution. They know we must act