

IMPACT OF REPUBLICAN BUDGET CUTS ON RURAL AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. BISHOP] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Speaker, we are here today to focus on rural communities and the impact of the proposed Republican budget cuts on rural America. Current common wisdom is that two elements are essential for sustainable rural development: first, long-range strategic planning, and second, local leadership. We must support the efforts of State and Federal officials, and more importantly, the motivation and leadership shown by local community leaders who have been successful in making educational advances, and rural economic development a reality in their own communities. But we must look forward to more.

We have all heard the statistics describing the decline of agriculture as the main rural economic base. And we know that rural areas differ greatly by region in terms of publication, income levels, and the relative importance of agriculture to the local economy. We also know that the shift in the national economy toward world markets requires rural areas—which are hampered by geographic isolation, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of capital—to compete in an unfamiliar global arena. But I believe that the citizens of Georgia, and particularly in the second district, have some of the most enterprising, efficient, and effective rural communities in the Nation.

But the budget cuts proposed by the Republican Leadership work against the common wisdom of how we can best support the vitality of our rural communities and citizens. First of all, let me speak about the Republican budget proposal which cuts over \$13 billion from our farm commodity programs. These cuts will come out of the pockets of farmers who live in my district. According to a recent letter sent to the Speaker from 15 members of the Speaker's own party, the current Freedom to Farm proposal will cause the U.S. taxpayer to actually spend even more on subsidies under the Freedom to Farm proposal than under the proposal put forth by the Democrats, or even the farm proposal put forward by the Republicans in the other body.

Other cuts proposed by the Republicans will put a dagger in rural America. From health care to agriculture to education, the Republican budget targets rural America, where we can least afford to lessen our efforts. The Republican budget raises taxes on over 229 thousand working families in rural Georgia by an average of \$368 by the 2002. In addition, the Republican cuts to the earned income tax credit will add an \$84.5 million tax increase on working families and their children in rural Georgia.

Republican education cuts will deny 113,000 children basic and advanced skills instruction in rural America in

1996 alone. Title 1 funds for reading instruction in rural areas will be cut by \$113 million, denying crucial assistance at a time when many small-town and rural school systems are already having trouble making ends meet.

The Republican budget will cut rural housing funding in our small communities. Cuts to public housing capital assistance in rural areas will total \$460 million next year, which will severely hinder efforts by rural housing agencies to provide security and anticrime programs. The Republicans will also cut \$108 million in funding for assistance to the homeless in rural America. This will mean 4.9 million fewer nights of shelter for America's rural homeless.

Republicans propose to cut Medicare by \$270 billion in this body—three times larger than the largest cuts in history—just to pay for a tax cut for the wealthy. Their budget will cut Medicare spending in rural communities by \$58 billion over 7 years, a 20-percent cut in the year 2002. The Republican cuts will force 9.6 million older and disabled Americans in rural America to pay higher premiums and higher deductibles. In Georgia, it will cut \$2.7 billion for our rural areas from Medicare.

The Republican Medicaid cuts will eliminate coverage for children, nursing home residents, and people who need long-term care throughout rural America. Two million, two hundred thousand rural Americans—including over 1 million children—will be denied Medicaid coverage. The budget will cut Medicaid in rural areas by as much as \$45 billion, forcing poor children, people with disabilities, and older Americans to lose coverage.

We should be focusing on four key principles that will help our rural communities:

First: Providing economic opportunity that will create jobs within the community and region, and training for jobs that offer upward mobility;

Second: Offering assistance for sustainable community development to further the creation of vibrant community institutions;

Third: Encouraging community-based partnerships that involve all segments of the community, including our centers of learning and community institutions; and

Fourth: Helping to provide a strategic vision for change that builds on the assets of the community—coordinating a response to community needs in a comprehensive fashion.

We must look forward to the survival of small and rural communities; we should not be looking for opportunities to twist the dagger into the heart of rural America, the dagger that is offered by the Republican budget proposals.

MEDICARE AND MEDICAID PROPOSALS WILL DEVASTATE SENIORS, POOR WOMEN, AND CHILDREN

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

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the House of Representatives is the People's House. We were sent here to Congress with a mission: to serve the people. As Members of Congress, we should be listening to our constituents and voting against proposals that will devastate our seniors, poor women, and children.

First, the Republicans went after Medicare, saying they were going to save it by cutting \$270 billion out of it. And this time, the Republicans are going after Medicaid, the program that serves the poorest, the sickest—people most in need.

They said they were saving Medicare. Now they say they are saving Medicaid by cutting \$182 billion from the program. Well, I come from Florida where I served for 10 years in the Florida House. In Florida we have a saying for that kind of thing, "That dog won't hunt."

Thousands of my constituents have told me that they are outraged at the Republicans' reverse Robin Hood tactics, stealing from the working people and the poor and giving tax breaks to the wealthy.

Mr. Speaker, we can fool some of the people some of the time, but we cannot fool all the people all of the time.

I am most concerned about how the Republican Medicaid plan will hurt Florida. Basically, it is a big slap in the face to the thousands of Floridians on a fixed income, just managing to get by.

According to our Governor, the Medicaid plan will cost our State \$8.4 billion over the next 7 years. But forget about these huge dollar figures for a moment. Let's look at this in real terms: people!

Under the Republican Medicaid plan formula, hundreds of thousands of Florida residents would be cut from the program. Let me ask you: What do the Republicans think the Floridians cut off from Medicaid are going to do for health care? Do they have a plan for that? I don't think so.

The biggest problem with the Republican Medicaid plan is that the Republican formula for distributing funds to the States does not take into account Florida's population explosion. Florida's growth should not be overlooked. My State will be capped at a 6 percent growth rate from 1998 to 2002, while Florida can expect that the growth in Florida is expected to go from 12 to 14 percent.

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That, my friends, is a cut. The Republicans are putting up smoke and mirrors when they say that these are not cuts.

Let us look at the facts. Holding Florida to the measure of other States' growth rate is completely unfair. The numbers just do not add up. I do not care how you slice it, a cut is a cut is a cut.

The Florida delegation should be working together in a bipartisan fashion to protect Florida. If these Medicaid cuts pass, we may well be declaring Florida a permanent disaster area.

Not only are the Republicans cutting away at funds for these programs, they are cutting away Federal Medicaid protection for our Nation's seniors. Over 60 percent of our nursing home residents get help from Medicaid. In 1994, over 100,000 Florida seniors lived in our State's 649 nursing homes. Right now, these nursing home residents have rights. They are protected by the Federal guidelines. The Republican Medicaid plans cut out quality care standards which are currently in place.

Take out these provisions, and I can see the newspaper headlines now: "Abuse in Nursing Homes Increase." "Doesn't Anyone Care About Nursing Home Residents?" "Where Have All the Nursing Home Watchdogs Gone?" This is outrageous, and the Republicans should be ashamed of themselves.

So, although I share the goals of balancing the budget, I cannot, in good faith, balance the budget on the backs of the poor, women, children, elderly, and the disabled.

Last week in Florida, I spoke to the National Council of Senior Citizens; and, as I close, I want to close with one saying: Wake up, America. In particular, wake up Florida.

EFFECTS OF BUDGET CUTS ON AMERICA'S CHILDREN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, let me begin tonight with a quote from Hubert Humphrey, and this is something that Hubert Humphrey said in 1977, and I quote:

It was once said that the moral test of government is how that government treats those who are in the dawn of life, the children; those who are in the twilight of life, the elderly; and those who are in the shadows of life, the sick, the needy and the handicapped.

When this Congress is put to those tests, it fails miserably on all of these counts. Last week, the GOP budget ax came down on seniors; and, this week, it comes down on kids.

Now, my Republican colleagues will argue that they are making tough decisions to balance that budget, that this budget represents a shared sacrifice for a noble purpose; but, folks, the sacrifice is not shared, and the purpose is not noble.

There is nothing noble in asking the poor to sacrifice for the rich. There is

nothing noble in asking the sick to sacrifice for the healthy. There is nothing noble in asking the weak to sacrifice for the strong.

Winners in this budget are the corporations that will now be allowed to legally dodge paying taxes and the other special interest whose loopholes have been left wide open.

The sacrifices in this budget come from our most vulnerable citizens: the poor, the sick, the disabled, the elderly and, yes, our children.

Yesterday, the White House released a report on the impact of the Republican budget on America's children. In its analysis, the White House, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Human Services and the Urban Institute, looked at nine areas where kids will be asked to bear the brunt of GOP budget cuts.

According to the study, the health of our children will be put in jeopardy by a combination of Medicaid cuts, the repeal—I repeat, the repeal of the vaccines for children program, and cuts in child nutrition.

Consider the number of children who benefit from these programs and the number of children who stand to lose under the GOP budget. Medicaid pays for immunizations, regular checkups, and intensive care in case of emergencies for about 18 million children in America. In fact, one half of Medicaid beneficiaries are children.

The Republican budget would eliminate this health care coverage for as many as 4.4 million children nationwide. Let me repeat that. Mr. Speaker, 4.4 million children nationwide would have their health care coverage eliminated.

Among the children who could be denied coverage, many are disabled. This budget would deny as many as 755,000 disabled children cash benefits in the year 2002. For disabled children, Medicaid helps to pay for wheelchairs, for communication devices for therapy, for respite care for families, and for home modifications. Without this help, patients may be forced to seek institutional placement for their disabled children.

The Republican budget repeals the vaccines for children program. Now, that means it cuts \$1.5 billion that would otherwise provide vaccinations, immunizations for our children.

As the White House was releasing its findings yesterday, I was visiting with administrators and the staff in New Haven, CT at the Children's Hospital, Yale University's Children's Hospital. I was there to brief them on the budget process and to better understand how Medicaid cuts would impact their young patients. The health care professionals that I visited with told me that they do not know how they are going to provide the same level of care for our children if Medicaid is cut back by 20 to 30 percent, as the Republican budget proposes.

Let me talk a little bit about Connecticut. Connecticut health care pro-

viders have every single right to be concerned about children in our State, because 14 percent of them, of our children, rely on Medicaid for their basic health needs. And according to the study that was released yesterday, the Republican budget cuts will hit Connecticut children hard.

Let me repeat some of those cuts for Connecticut children, the cuts that I talked to the Yale Children's Hospital about yesterday.

Medicaid pays for basic health services for 166,000 children in the State of Connecticut. The budget would eliminate Medicaid coverage for as many as 57,983 children in the State of Connecticut. It will deny as many as 4,000 disabled children in Connecticut cash benefits in the year 2002.

Mr. Speaker, the dean of the Yale School of Medicine, Dr. Joseph Warshaw, was at this meeting yesterday; and I would like to quote Dr. Warshaw. And the quote is, "If we abandon this safety net, the kids are really going to suffer." I am not making that up. You can see that quote in the New Haven Register today.

The vice president for administration spoke up and talked about how the hospital would certainly accept all those children who were faced with a health care problem and would not want to deny them any health care, but they were going to be faced with how they were going to try to have to deal with the level of services they may have to and how they would probably have to cut back on services.

Kids are really going to suffer. That is a pretty strong statement. And let me be very honest with you. That statement does not come from a Democratic Member of the House of Representatives, and I am a Democratic Member of the House of Representatives. It does not come from someone with any kind of a partisan interest in this debate. It comes from a health care provider who understands what these cuts in Medicaid will mean in real terms to the children that he sees every single day at this hospital.

Our debate on the magnitude of these Medicaid cuts is about more than ideology. It is about more than a political philosophy. It is more than an intellectual or an academic exercise. That is not what this is all about. It is about reality and real people. It is about the reality that these deep Medicaid cuts are going to hit kids, kids in this country, kids in the State of Connecticut, very, very hard. And that is why tonight some of us are here as we stand with these photographs of American families that rely on Medicaid for their basic health care needs.

I would like to just introduce you to one family and tell you their story in their own words. A mother from Illinois tells us how Medicaid has helped her to earn her nursing degree without putting her children's health at risk. This is a quote.

In December of 1996, I will graduate with an associate degree in nursing and a lot of