

President's plan there is only a \$4 difference between the Republican plan and the President's own plan?

Mr. POMEROY. Reclaiming my time, it is not at all clear to me where the administration is on the part B premium number. But I will tell the gentleman this. The only plan that virtually doubles the part B premium is the GOP-passed budget resolution.

Let me tell my colleagues another thing. I used to regulate insurance. I spent a lot of time dealing with the insurance needs of senior citizens in the State that I represent. There is an issue called balanced billing. In the old days, I mean back just now a decade, even less than that, Medicare would pay a portion of the bill, but the physician could bill the senior citizen that amount. Then any amount more, Medicare would pay the Medicare part, but the senior citizen out of pocket would be eligible for the difference.

Congress in its wisdom a few years ago in a bipartisan vote voted to say, no, no, no, doctors, you cannot charge unlimited amounts over Medicare. You can only bill in fact when fully implemented, I believe the difference is 15 percent over what Medicare approves as an appropriate charge. If you are in an indemnity plan under the Republican budget, you are again exposed to that virtually unlimited amount over what is a Medicare approved charge.

So we can talk differences in part B premium. I believe they are very serious differences, new out-of-pocket costs for seniors. But I think even more serious is this whole business of balanced billing, the physician billing over and above what the Medicare has said is an acceptable charge.

Mr. SCARBOROUGH. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman will continue to yield, please just clarify for me. The administration proposal is scored, shows a \$4 difference in the year 2002 between the Republican plan. I mentioned that before, and then the gentleman said that he did not know if that was the case, but said the Republican plan was the only plan that doubled premiums. If in fact that is the case and that has been documented in the Post and other publications, then the President's plan too would double it, would it not, if there is only a \$4 difference in premiums in 2002?

Mr. POMEROY. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Speaker, the only plan that causes part B premiums to double is the GOP budget plan. The things that the gentleman does not consider Medicare cuts in fact to a senior citizen that suddenly has to pay a lot more out of pocket because Medicare does not pay it anyone, I am telling the gentleman, they think their benefits have been cut. They think it in a very real and personal way.

I yielded happily to my friend from South Carolina, and we had an interesting exchange. In fact I wish we had a lot more of that going on right now in constructive circumstances, most particularly at a negotiating table.

I have been in public life a long time. It has been my opportunity, I have not

been in Congress long, but I have got the opportunity to work for public issues on behalf of North Dakotans in the State legislature and for the insurance commissioner. In addition to that, I was in the private sector practicing law in my hometown. I have been involved in lots of negotiations, lots and lots of negotiations.

What I learned is, you come to the table with the position. You care deeply about it. The other side comes to the table with a position. They care deeply about that. And then you start to deal. I do not mean callously, just cutting deals willy-nilly. But you begin to negotiate, engaging the other side, talking about the things that really matter to you, trying to find common grounds.

I think it is a tragedy that this afternoon, with the Federal Government, portions of it shut down, with budget talks at an impasse, we do not have this kind of negotiation under way. I urge all of my colleagues to insist we get negotiations underway and let us fund Government while these important talks proceed.

DO NOT PLAY POLITICS WITH MEDICARE OR THE BUDGET

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

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, prior to coming to the U.S. Congress, I used to practice medicine. I practiced internal medicine and half of my patients were senior citizens. I do hope someday to be able to go back to my practice and resume taking care of senior citizens because I very much enjoy that type of practice. I have always like caring for seniors.

□ 1745

They are all in the Medicare program. The Medicare Program has been a tremendous success. I think it has been instrumental in prolonging lives of seniors. And one of the key components of our balanced budget plan that we put on the President's desk is maintaining the solvency of the Medicare plan that makes sure that it will be there for seniors, and all we have done with this plan is we have done exactly what the President and the First Lady said needed to be done in 1993 when they were pushing their health care plan. They said, and if I may paraphrase them if I do not quote them exactly right, is that all you need to do is lower the inflation rate in the Medicare plan from where it is right now, 10 or 11 percent down to about 7 percent, and the plan comes into balance.

Now there has been a lot of stuff said about the Medicare Part B premium. The GOP plan is going to double the Medicare Part B premium over the next 7 years. Well, guess what, my colleagues. Under the Democrats who have controlled this House for 40 years, guess what? Over the last 7 years the Medicare Part B premium doubled, they doubled the premium the last 7

years. Under the President's proposal it is going to much double. But, you know what? Next year, in the election year, under the President's proposal, he wants to reduce the Medicare Part B premium, and then he will increase it steadily every year thereafter once he is firmly ensconced in the White House for another 4 years.

I believe this is wrong, that you should not play politics with a program as important as Medicare which provides health care for our seniors. I also think you should not be playing politics with an issue as important, as crucial, as balancing our budget in 7 years.

Mr. Speaker, I ran on a campaign that says you must balance the budget in 7 years, and there was a very, very high degree of frustration amongst the voters in my district because they heard about Gramm-Rudman, they heard about the budget deal of 1987, they heard about the budget deal of 1990, and the tax increase of 1990 and how that was going to balance our budget, and then they heard again about the 1993 program, how this was finally going to do it.

Here we go again in 1995. We have got \$200—\$180 billion deficit, and the budget that the President presented to us scored by the CBO, an agency that the President himself said is the group that should be scoring the budgets, says that his budget is going to be in debt, show deficits \$200 billion a year out of 5 to 7 years into the plan. He finally produced a slightly better budget that was only going to have a deficit of about \$100—120 billion a year.

Now what we are saying, what the Republican freshmen are saying, is enough is enough, no more smoke and mirrors. We want a budget that is going to balance in 7 years.

Now there are a lot of people getting up here and saying, "Oh, we need to do a continuing resolution and get the Government open." I have got a lot of Government workers in my district. I have got Kennedy Space Center. I have got engineers who are furloughed, and guess what, my colleagues on that side of the aisle? They call me up, and they send me letters, and they say, "Don't give in. I know I'm laid off, I know I'm not working, but you have got to balance the budget. We cannot continue to run these deficits." Mr. Speaker, they tell me it is immoral, they want me to hang tough, they do not want me to cave in. They want the budget balanced, and they want the budget balanced in 7 years.

Indeed I got a phone call yesterday from a Democrat who told me that everything we are doing is right. He said, "Don't give in."

Now I am not going to vote for another CR. We signed a CR 3 or 4 weeks ago, and what happened? That gave the President the chance to waffle for 3 or 4 weeks and the AFL-CIO 3 to 4 weeks to run million-dollar-a-day ads trying to get us not to balance the budget.

I will tell you what I think we need to do. Half of your conference over there agrees we need to balance the budget in 7 years, and what I say is the President will not come around, let us forget about the President, let us sit down with the conservative side of the Democratic Caucus with us and come to terms on a 7-year balanced budget so we can do a veto override, and we can reopen the Government, and we can all go home for Christmas.

But I bought a Christmas tree, and I brought my wife and daughter up here, and I am willing to stay as long as it takes.

THIS IS A HOSTAGE SITUATION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WHITE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. PETERSON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PETERSON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, this is a hostage situation. I know from which I speak. I was a hostage of the Vietnamese Government for six Christmases. I knew what was going on at that time. As a hostage in Vietnam I knew what my options were. I really had a feel of the paralysis of the circumstance, and I could live with that. I was a volunteer, just like so many of our brave men and women that are in Bosnia right now are volunteers to serve their Nation, and I would take my hit. I did not have any problem with that. But what we have here is a nation, an entire nation, every citizen of the United States, being held hostage to the radical extremist portion of the Republican Caucus conference.

Now maybe they can justify that. Maybe that is OK. Maybe they are OK out there writing the new Dickens Christmas Schrooge Carol based on new circumstances, modern circumstances. Maybe in fact they all wish to be the Christmas Scrooge because they are holding not only the Federal employees who have been furloughed, they are holding this entire country hostage to an ideology that the country is not buying into.

The United States citizenry is not extreme, they are not radicals. They are God-fearing, compassionate, logically thinking people, and they cannot understand why it is that we as a House of Representatives cannot sit down and agree to disagree; first of all, to get down to some negotiations, but then to get to the point of compromise, yes, compromise, the word "compromise" which has been for whatever reason essentially destroyed in its definition. In fact we are using the term "compromise" in its worst categorization, which would be to suggest to compromise one's values.

We are ultimately going to have to compromise, my colleagues. We are ultimately going to have to do the people's business. We are ultimately going to have to answer to the mainstream of America as we deal with this budget issue.

Extremist, radical ideas are not America's ideas. There will be a price to pay if the radical elements continue, and that price will be paid at the ballot box next November because that is how it works here.

The question is who, in fact, is in charge? Who is in charge? Who is leading here in this national government? We have lost our leadership. Clearly the Republican side has lost its leadership because they have failed to keep the motors of government working, which is their contract with America as a majority. It is their contract to keep the offices of the government running. They have purposefully shut them down, and they have done so, in fact I believe, with malice. We need to move on.

THE BLAME GAME

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

Mr. LEWIS of Kentucky. Mr. Speaker, today I listened to the President in his news conference, and he was talking about essentially in the same way and with the same terms as the previous speaker about extreme freshmen, 73 individuals that are holding up the Government, and you know it is the same old story: the blame game.

By the way, I remember a President by the name of John F. Kennedy, and I remember when the Bay of Pigs tragedy happened, and President Kennedy stood up and said, "I take the blame, the buck stops here." But what I heard from President Clinton today was that it is the freshmen that are causing this problem, those extremists.

It reminded me not too long ago when we had the tragedy in Waco. The President said, "It is not my fault," and the Attorney General had to take the blame.

He is never to blame. It is never his fault.

He has offered four budgets that do not keep his word with CBO scoring, but it is not his fault. There were three bills on his desk that he could have signed that would have got the Government up and running again, Commerce, Interior, and VA-HUD, that would have put the people back to work, but he vetoed them, and he blames the freshmen.

Mr. Speaker, let us talk about those extreme freshmen just for a minute. What is extreme, and I asked this the other day, what is extreme about wanting a balanced budget in 7 years? Seven years, not tomorrow, not next year, not 2 years from now, but 7 years. A glidepath for 7 years that is going to actually spend basically \$3 billion more than what we are spending now. There are no cuts. We are going to be spending more money. As I said, a glidepath towards a balanced budget that will provide a future for our children and our grandchildren, that will not allow this country to go bankrupt. What is extreme about that? Trying to save the economic viability of this country.

Medicare. The President said we are extremists, that we are going to cut, slash, kill Medicare. There is only a 2-percent difference between the Republican plan and the President's plan. Basically \$138 difference over a year period of time in the year 2002 on what would be spent per individual.

What are we talking about here when we are talking about extremists and radicals? Individuals that want to save Medicare for their mothers and fathers. My mother and father are 78 years old. I want to save Medicare.

□ 1800

Why would I do anything to hurt the most precious people that I know? I do not know when this rhetoric is going to stop, but it is time that we get serious about balancing the budget. It is time we do have serious negotiations, but the President is not willing. He is the one that is not willing. He is the one that broke it off last night. He is the one that said, in one instance through the Vice President, that, "Well, we cannot go specifically by the CBO. We have to have other numbers in there." Then he comes back later and he said, "That was not what we meant. We are willing to go by CBO scores now."

What are we dealing with here? Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, I wish the President would just come forth, put a budget on the table that would provide for a balanced budget in 7 years and that would allow the CBO to score it to see if the numbers are right. I think we would be willing to then look at, what is he talking about, Medicare and taxes? We are willing to look.

WE CANNOT FORGET THE POOR IN OUR NATION IN ORDER TO MAKE THE WEALTHY WEALTHIER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WHITE). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas [Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I have listened with interest. I, too, am tired with the rhetoric. No matter which way you put it, there are real people out there being affected. I am from a regional city with many, many, many Federal employees. I, too, have gotten messages: Stick with the President.

I am from a city and a district that has one of the most well-known medical schools, one of the most well-known dental schools. A medical school that has four Nobel Prize winners there now in my district. None of them are for these cuts. All of them understand that when we put the bottom line to it, there are a few more dollars being added. So no, there is not a cut as such; but what we have forgotten to be honest with the people about, there are a million more people going into the system to share these dollars. When you put that many more people