

MEDICARE

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, the Republican Congress has put forward a budget blueprint to cut Medicare by \$270 billion, but have yet to illustrate how they are going to slash this program.

Many constituents have written me expressing grave concern about the largest cuts in Medicare history and have asked how they will affect them. Unfortunately, I do not have definite answers to my constituents' concerns.

My fear is that the Republicans are going to rush Medicare changes through the House of Representatives in September within a matter of days and attempt to force a vote on this issue before the American public has an opportunity to examine how these cuts will impact them.

This is not the proper way to run Government or be honest with the American public.

If the Republicans truly wanted to improve Medicare, then they wouldn't start by just cutting money from the program.

They are making their cuts on the backs of senior citizens and threatening the Medicare Contract With America's Seniors.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to express my concern over the House action earlier this week to reverse the Stokes-Boehrlert amendment to the VA, HUD, and Independent Agencies appropriations bill.

The supporters of this amendment were trying to prevent a package of measures limiting the EPA's ability to improve, implement, and enforce environmental regulations.

These curbs on the EPA's ability to enforce air and water quality standards are now unfortunately back in the bill which passed the House on Monday. They limit EPA's ability to spend funds on activities related to the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, RCRA, and Superfund—they even prevent the EPA from establishing drinking water standards for radon and arsenic—both known carcinogens.

These provisions are terrible in terms of the effects they will have on the environment.

One provision in particular prohibits EPA from using funds to assess any penalty where the state gives the polluter immunity from prosecution because the polluter voluntarily conducts an environmental audit.

I think most people in America would agree that no corporation should be able to pollute without paying the price.

Yet, the language that is included in this bill prevents EPA from assessing a penalty whether or not a state takes any action against a violator. In essence, the polluter is immune from an EPA assessed penalty whether they correct their violation or not.

The self-audit privilege in this bill does nothing to help the good guys—those businesses and individuals that are trying to comply with the law—while it can easily serve as a shield to hide behind for conscious yet continuing violators.

The result will be that those who are working to be in compliance with the law now will still work toward that end, while those who choose to violate the law will have an out from penalization.

The bill already cuts EPA's enforcement budget in half. This and other provisions only serve to tie the agency's hands further by

compromising its ability to enforce environmental regulations.

It is the enforcement of these regulations that have increased the quality of the water we drink and fish and swim in and the quality of the air we breath. Without enforcement, the statutes we have on the books become hollow.

If it wasn't offensive enough that these provisions were in the bill to begin with, it is even more offensive that after the environmental victory of voting them out, this body voted to put them back into the bill again.

REPUBLICAN MEDICARE SPENDING REDUCTIONS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Hawaii [Mrs. MINK] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, I rise to express deep concern about proposed Republican Medicare spending cuts.

All the evidence—an increasing Medicare-aged population, extended life expectancies, and inflation—points to Medicare costs rising 7.7 percent per year. Yet, the Republicans are budgeting for only a 5.8 percent per year Medicare growth rate. Holding the Medicare growth rate to 5.8 percent ignores the fact that the percentage of older and less healthy Medicare recipients is increasing. Since 1966, the percentage of Medicare recipients in the various age groups has undergone the following changes:

[In percent]		
Age group	1965	Present
85 and older	7	11
80-84	10	13
75-79	20	20
70-74	28	26
65-69	34	30

The resulting gap between Medicare funding and Medicare costs will reduce the scope and quality of medical care provided. There is no other way.

The Republican budget does little to contain rising medical costs. Instead, it simply cuts the amount of Federal Government will have to pay to cover these costs. By ensuring that Medicare beneficiaries will have fewer benefits, the Republicans will undo much of what Medicare has accomplished over the past 30 years. These accomplishments are astounding, and include:

(A) Dropping the poverty rate among seniors from 30 percent to just 12 percent;

(B) Increasing the rate of health care coverage for seniors from 50 percent to 97 percent;

(C) Extending health care coverage to seniors most in need as evidenced by the fact that 83 percent of Medicare recipients earn less than \$25,000;

(D) Increasing access to health care for minorities by ending the pre-Medicare practice of certain hospitals and nursing homes of denying treatment to minorities;

(E) Reducing the rate of heart- and stroke-related deaths by 40 percent and

63 percent, respectively, between 1960 and 1991; and

(F) Extending life expectancies for women who live to 65 from 16 to 19 years and for men who live to 65 from 13 years to 16 years since 1965.

Republicans argue that they are saving—not dismantling—Medicare. They say Medicare spending must be reduced drastically. They cite the recent Medicare trustees report which indicates that the Medicare trust fund may be broke in 2002. What the Republicans don't say is that every Medicare trustees report has predicted the trust fund's impending insolvency. The 1970 report predicted insolvency in 1972, the 1972 report picked 1976, the 1982 report said 1987, and so on. Congress acted to avoid the impending insolvency following the release of those reports. And, each time Congress acted, it did not have to cut back on Medicare benefits to the elderly. Furthermore, the recent trustees report advises that the financial standing of the Medicare trust fund could cover a wider span of years. In other words, the trustees report states that the trust fund could become insolvent in 2002—in 7 years—or in the year 2006—in 11 years—or 2009—in 14 years. Given that the recent Medicare trustees report predicts trust fund's insolvency in different years and the fact that the dire consequences of insolvency predicted in earlier trustees report have not occurred, I believe the Republican use of the recent Medicare trustees report is both exploitative and unjustified. The report has been used by Republicans who had to find some way to pay for their tax cuts that will, in large part, benefit mainly the Nation's top 1 percent of income earners. There is little doubt that the Republicans are slashing Medicare spending by \$270 billion solely to pay for their \$245 billion tax cut. If the Republicans' objective was to improve Medicare's financial condition, they would be proposing much smaller Medicare spending reductions, and recommending instead cost containment proposals.

I respectfully submit that if the Republicans are truly serious about saving Medicare, their budget plan would seek to contain rising medical medical costs rather than just hold down what the Federal Government will pay for such costs. The proposed Republican Medicare spending reductions of \$270 billion is difficult to comprehend and impossible to justify.

The American public must not be fooled into thinking that these cuts are necessary to save Medicare from insolvency. These monstrous cuts are solely to pay for the Republican tax cuts.

It must not be allowed to happen.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THE SECRETARY OF ENERGY'S TRAVEL

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

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, I think that you are aware that as the Chairman of the Committee on the Budget Working Group on National Security, I have spent a great deal of time with respect to the Department of Energy and examining the needs and missions of the Department of Energy and making a full investigation into what is going on there.

As a result of that, it has been called to my attention, and I have found out a great deal about certain travel habits of the Secretary of Energy from the perspective of the monies that have been transferred from the accounts in the programs that safeguard nuclear energy and nuclear weapons, away from those programs and into the travel accounts.

I wanted, today, to talk about a different problem that has been brought to my attention with respect to the travel. The Secretary has justified these trips, among other reasons, for the benefit that they have brought to American companies that have been able to generate a great deal of commercial transactions as a result.

In fact, the Secretary has made claims of about \$20 billion with respect to the amount of transactions that have been entered into as a result of her travels.

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In fact, it has not been brought to my attention that there have been any more than about \$400,000 or \$500,000 of actual committed contracts; and what I wanted to talk about today was the cancellation of the Enron contract, which I believe can be tried directly to the Secretary's involvement.

In other words, what I am saying is that not only has the Secretary of Energy not been able to catalyze these contracts, but in this case, has actually damaged the relationship between the United States and India to the extent that the Enron contract has been canceled.

Mr. Speaker, today there was a Washington Times article about the cancellation of what is nearly a \$2.8 billion power plant project at Dabhoi in Maharashtra, India. That is the state of which Bombay is the capital. This is where the Enron deal has been taking place.

They are building a nuclear plant there. It involves the Enron Corp., the U.S. corporation, General Electric, and Bechtel. This is a deal that had a great deal of support from OPIC and from the Export-Import Bank, and it has been the target of intense criticism by nationalists in India.

Nonetheless, President Clinton felt that it was necessary to sanction two trade missions to India, led by Secretary O'Leary, in July 1994 and then in February 1995, trips that served to raise the profile of the already controversial Enron deal.

In the wake of the February trade mission, the Maharashtra state government was defeated by a nationalist co-

alition that ran on its distinctly anti-American platform with particular venom reserved for the Enron deal.

Nevertheless, the new state government and Maharashtra did not immediately terminate the Enron deal. That came only very, very recently, in the last 3 days, after Secretary O'Leary very unwisely threatened the Indian Government, without Clinton administration approval, by stating that, "The failure to honor the agreements between the project partners and the various Indian governments will jeopardize not only the Dabhoi project, but also the other private power projects that are being proposed for international financing."

It has been widely reported in the Indian press that as a result of that, this blatant intimidation tactic on the part of Secretary O'Leary inflamed the national sentiments in this state of India during what was already a very, very tough and sensitive process in terms of trying to save this deal. Then the governments of Dabhoi and Maharashtra canceled this.

I want to share with my colleagues just two thoughts about this, because I think it is important to understand that the conducting of this trade mission has not only been an expensive boondoggle serving the Secretary's wanderlust, but in this case, the intimidating and blatant threats have actually killed the deal.

I want to show my colleagues that this is something that the Secretary sent to all of the people that were on the trade mission in February. It says, "A Mission to India." It is an alternative view by Carl Stoiber. Carl Stoiber is the director of international programs for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. This was produced and distributed out of Secretary O'Leary's office.

As can be seen, there is a one cartoon, she says, "Yes, the Air Force runs a really great flying cocktail lounge." Here is another one, "Let's make sure we stop in Shannon on the return flight." They did, in fact, stop in Shannon.

The last one I want to show, and we can understand how perhaps the Indian Government might take some offense, there is a can of milk; it says, "not concentrated milk." It says, "simmered milk," and then it has a picture of a cow and it says "with cow dung patties."

This was distributed by the Secretary of Energy and sent out from her office. I think it is time that we had a full-scale investigation of the travel office and the travels of the Secretary of Energy.

KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL

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

Mr. DORNAN. Mr. Speaker, with all the rush of events, before we take a

long 5-week break, I wanted to mention what will be one of my greatest memories serving in Washington, and that was the dedication a few days ago of the Korean War Memorial.

It was absolutely an inspiring day. Veterans of the Korean conflict came from all over the country, some from around the world, to be part of this memorial ceremony. Most of them were a bit hurt that it was not a Ronald Reagan or someone like that to officiate as the Commander in Chief.

They felt the speech that Mr. Clinton delivered could have been the very same speech with the word "Vietnam" transposed instead of the word "Korea." They are both small Asian countries, almost the same identical population, both divided as a fallout of World War II and the end of colonialism, whether it was French colonialism or Japanese imperial warlord colonialism.

One had a DMZ on either side of the 30th parallel; the other had a DMZ on either side of the 17th parallel. As we look across the reflecting ponds from this uplifting Korean War Memorial, we think how sad the struggle was, the birth pangs of the Vietnam Memorial which came chronologically, in a strange way ahead of the Korean Memorial. One can see that, by design, the Korean Memorial was to elicit not a feeling of inspiration, which turned out to be true the minute the first hero's name was etched into the black marble, but somehow or another was supposedly to evoke shame, a black gash in the ground the way it was described by its 21-year-old young architect.

No American flag was ever to be on top, in front of or at either end of that memorial.

I was in pilot training when the Korean War mercifully came to an end after two years and thousands of deaths while they argued over a negotiating table, the same way the Vietnam War dragged on for two or three years from 1968, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1973, all over arguments, in the same city, Paris basically, P'anmunjom, Paris, the same type of communist negotiators, never negotiating in good faith. It was tragic.

Those of us who were veterans, in the House fought to get a flag at the Vietnam Memorial, and they made us take it off the top, put it down in front in the grassy courtyard area where the gash was to be cut into the earth, the depression. Then we fought for a statue of three Americans, a Hispanic-American, an African-American, a heritage soldier, a soldier representing all of the other various heritages.

Now, I can totally understand why Native Americans who fought in every one of our wars and on both sides of the so-called Plains Wars would like some sort of recognition with a memorial, and I promised the Native American Indian vets that I would fight for that.

Mr. Speaker, we finally got the statue approved. It is beautiful and inspirational. When we left the room, a source