

House Democrats have ignored the warnings of the Medicare trustees regarding the system's impending bankruptcy, and instead they have played politics with Medicare, exploiting and twisting the issue to deceive and scare senior citizens, which is particularly, I think, despicable, given the fact that so many of our senior citizens are frail and elderly and vulnerable, and the President has submitted a string of budget plans that all fail to, again, deal with Medicare's financial crisis.

Unlike the President and the liberal House Democrats, Republicans listened to the Medicare trustees' warnings, and we passed a plan that would have saved Medicare for another generation.

□ 1800

Our plan increases Medicare spending per beneficiary, per Medicare recipient, each year from \$4,800 last year to more than \$7,100 by the year 2002. That is a total Medicare spending increase of 62 percent. So we increased Medicare spending, increased Medicare health care choices by introducing the concept of managed care, physician service organizations and of medical savings accounts, while saving the program from bankruptcy.

Unfortunately, as I mentioned, this is the legislation that the President vetoed last November.

In addition to saving Medicare from bankruptcy, we Republicans are taking steps to aid senior citizens despite the President and the liberal House Democrats. As part of our Contract With America, we repeal the tax increase by the Clinton Democrats on social security benefits, a tax increase that takes affect on social security beneficiaries earning as little as \$3,400 per year. We offer tax relief for long-term health care insurance premiums and a \$1,000-tax deduction for elder care as part of the GOP Balanced Budget Act. Again, these are proposals the President vetoed.

We have passed legislation to increase the social security earnings test so that older Americans can continue to work without punitive taxation, and we passed a law that the President did sign protecting the rights of seniors to live in senior-only housing.

Clearly, colleagues and Mr. Speaker, saving Medicare is not one of the President's priorities; getting reelected is. Rather than preventing or joining with us to prevent Medicare's bankruptcy, the President and the liberal House Democrats prefer to play politics. They seized on this issue to try to win back control of the House of Representatives. They are only interested in using this issue, exploiting it for naked political gain. This is a transparent grab at political power, regaining political power.

As much as the President would like it, Medicare's problems will not wait a minute until after the November election to be solved. We Republicans have a plan that will save the system for future generations of senior citizens, and

the only person standing in the way of their health care security, the only persons standing in the way of health care security for elder Americans, is, in fact, President Clinton and the liberal House Democrats.

TEENAGE PREGNANCY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. TAYLOR of North Carolina). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from North Carolina [Mrs. CLAYTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, teenage pregnancy is a condition that can be controlled and prevented in many instances.

Yet, 30 percent of all out-of-wedlock births are to teenagers, below the age of 20.

That astonishing reality should be alarming to all in Congress.

No other industrialized nation, with a population comparable to the United States, has a problem of this magnitude.

On the issue of teenage pregnancy, we have the dubious distinction of leading the world.

Why, you may ask, is this problem out of control?

Simply put, it is out of control because we have not taken steps to control it.

That is changing.

In January, President Clinton announced a bipartisan "National Campaign To Reduce Teenage Pregnancy."

The mission of the campaign is, "To reduce teenage pregnancy by supporting values and stimulating actions that are consistent with a pregnancy-free adolescence."

The goal of the campaign is, "To reduce the teenage pregnancy rate by one-third by the year 2005."

Neither party, nor politics, nor philosophy should stand against this vital mission and this critical goal.

This is an issue that we should be able to work together regardless of our party affiliation. The mission is difficult, but it can be done. The goal is demanding, but it is within our reach.

As we consider how and where to reduce spending, we must not forget that teenage pregnancies cause a heavy burden on the Federal budget.

Medicaid funds, food stamps, and AFDC funds are especially hard-hit by the teenage pregnancy problem.

If we want to balance the budget, let us begin by working to bring some balance to the lives of thousands and thousands of our teenagers, involved in premature childbearing.

Teenage pregnancies cause a heavy burden on society and it robs teenagers of their youth and robs their children of the benefit of mature parents.

A recent report to Congress on out-of-wedlock childbearing indicates that 35 percent of all out-of-wedlock births are to women over age 25; 35 percent are to women 20 to 24 years of age and 30 percent are to teenagers.

Thirty percent of all out-of-wedlock births are to teenagers.

One objective of welfare reform, shared by both political parties, is to reduce teenage childbearing.

Pending legislation on welfare reform, however, embraces an unreasoned approach to reduce the number of out-of-wedlock births, by denying cash benefits to unwed teenage mothers.

This unreasoned approach is based on the perception that the current system has failed and contends that any proposed change, such as denying children food and medical care, must be a good change. Thus, those who propose eliminating welfare benefits to young unwed mothers argue that their approach can't make matters any worse than they already are.

Change for the sake of change is empty.

We need change, but we need change for the better. Such proposals appear premised on the belief that if Government ignores teen parents, they will go away or get married.

There is little or no research to support such contentions.

Reason, on the other hand, suggests that even if the belief held true for some, there would be many young children and mothers left destitute.

Reducing teenage childbearing is likely to require more than eliminating or manipulating welfare programs.

The underlying causes are economic and social poverty, lack of education, family and community support, adult guidance, and violence are all linked together.

These are not problems isolated to the very poor, but rather problems that cut a wide path across the entire spectrum—very wide and very deep.

There is considerable evidence that life skills training in combination with other social prevention programs have been very effective with young people who use alcohol, drugs, and tobacco and engage in other destructive behavior.

As a society we must consider an array of programs that foster positive and responsible development of our youth.

URGING SUPPORT FOR THE COMMUNITY RENEWAL PROJECT

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, this morning I attended a press conference held by JIM TALENT and J.C. WATTS to announce a community renewal project that will empower low-income communities. This bill was formulated and designed by the communities that it will effect. Congress went to the community leaders and asked them what will help them in their renewal projects. This initiative is what came out of those conversations.

I want to first of all commend JIM TALENT and J.C. WATTS for meeting with these community leaders and for

listening to them as they formulated the legislation that will help these communities to become strong.

A major component of this empowerment initiative is title II, which allows these communities to implement school choice. Not surprisingly, most of these community leaders made school choice a top priority in their list of essential components for the renewal of their communities.

According to the Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, 70 percent of low-income parents, who were aware of school choice opportunities, were supportive of school scholarships for their children. Their No. 1 comment was that in order to improve their communities, they must be able to have quality educational choices for their children.

I'd like to direct Members' attention today's Washington Times, page A3. The Associated Press is calling today the super Tuesday of school choice. There are a number school choice events happening today. Today in the other body, they voted on cloture of debate on the D.C. appropriations bill which includes choice scholarships for the low-income students of the District of Columbia. Unfortunately that vote failed by six votes.

In Milwaukee, Parents for School Choice is defending the Milwaukee plan before the Wisconsin Supreme Court and in St. Paul, MN, Governor Carlson's choice initiative will be debated.

In some parts of this great country, the state of education continues to decay. Despite solutions of more money, more bureaucracy, more regulation, and greater Federal intrusion into our schools, we would all agree things have gotten worse, not better.

Our children need the opportunity to pursue a good education. If this educational opportunity is outside their school district, they should have chance to take advantage of it and find their American dream through quality education.

A good education is a key ingredient in ending the cycle of poverty that entraps so many of our Nation's children. This empowerment initiative will liberate the parents of low-income children to choose a school that meets the educational needs of their children.

Mr. Speaker, the 104th Congress has been accused of not looking out for the poor and less advantaged, and simply being a voice for the rich. Well, Mr. Speaker, this bill will dispel that myth. In fact, it challenges these critics to match their rhetoric with their support for this proposal. This bill is targeted to the low-income families and communities—to the people who most need the opportunities of choice in education.

In an article in the Washington Times, Carol Innerst reported that public school teachers in troubled urban districts are much more likely to send their children to private schools than other Americans. A surprising 12.1 per-

cent of all public school teachers and administrators send their children to private schools. In those public school systems considered the worst, an average 32 percent of the public school teachers and administrators send their children to a school outside of the district they work in, frequently to a private school.

I want to encourage my colleagues to seriously consider supporting the Community Renewal Project when it is introduced on the House floor. It is a wonderful project that spans both ideological and political platforms. It is a bill that will help Americans pursue the American dream.

ILLEGAL CUBAN SHOOTDOWN WARRANTS PUNISHMENT OF CASTRO, BUT NOT DESPITE LONG-TERM UNITED STATES INTERESTS

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

Mr. SKAGGS. Mr. Speaker, the Castro regime has acted in callous violation of international law in shooting down two defenseless and clearly marked civilian aircraft. Whether or not the Brothers to the Rescue planes strayed into Cuban airspace hardly matters. No law permits a military fighter plane to shoot down an unarmed civilian aircraft. Civilized people everywhere are rightly outraged by these murders and by the disregard that the Castro regime has shown for human life and human rights.

The families of the pilots and crew who were killed have our sympathy in their tragic loss. These men were dedicated to a noble goal—freedom for the people of Cuba.

We are told that the Cuban MiG pilots made no effort to contact the Brothers to the Rescue pilots, to make the usual warning signals to them, or to escort their small airplanes from the area before firing on them. All this demonstrates a willful failure to follow the internationally agreed-upon rules for dealing with such a nonthreatening approach to national airspace.

Fidel Castro's desperate response reflects the nature of his regime. He's again shown us his contempt for international law and his need to isolate the Cuban people from the world community.

The steps the President has taken constitute, for the most part, a reasonable and measured response. The President has properly sought and won international condemnation for an act that flouts international law and norms. The President also has proposed legislation to enable him to use frozen Cuban assets to provide compensation to the victims' families. I expect to support that proposal. I also think it is reasonable to add some restrictions on travel at this time.

The President's call for expanding Radio Marti, however, makes sense if

and only if Radio Marti is first cleaned up. The problems that have plagued the operation of Radio Marti are legion and do not reflect well on the management of USIA's surrogate broadcasting programs. Now, more than ever, it is essential that Radio Marti be brought up to U.S. Information Agency standards for quality and accuracy of news broadcasts. Otherwise, expanding its operations will not serve U.S. interests.

I also do not agree with the President that it is in our national interest to cozy up to the Helms-Burton legislation, even in response to such an offensive provocation by the Cuban Government. If we tighten the embargo we will only be playing into Castro's hands by helping him to keep his people in a state of isolation and deprivation. As in the case of our other former and hold-over adversaries from the cold-war era, the best policy for the United States to follow, for its own self-interested reason and for purposes of reforming the political and economic system in Cuba, is a policy of tough-minded engagement.

The murderous attacks on the Brothers to the Rescue airplanes was an illegal and outrageous act. It is one for which Castro has to be punished. At the same time, we should not become captive to a limited ideology. Instead we should seek constructive ways to stand with the Cuban people in their struggle for freedom, and to serve the enlightened self-interest America has in a peaceful transition to political and economic freedom in Cuba.

MISSILE DEFENSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. WELDON] is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. WELDON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise this evening to speak, perhaps not for an hour but certainly for some time, on the issue of missile defense and partially in response to the administration's announcement of a little over a week ago in regard to their missile defense program for this fiscal year and the request to Congress which we anticipate receiving in the next several weeks.

TRIBUTE TO MC LEAN STEVENSON

Mr. Speaker, before I get into that, let me make a few comments about the unfortunate passing during the February work period of McLean Stevenson. Most of our colleagues in this Congress and most of the people around the country know McLean Stevenson as a Hollywood star who made his fame primarily through the program "M.A.S.H."

However, I want to speak briefly about McLean Stevenson and his commitment to fire and life safety issues. McLean Stevenson, at a young age, was rescued from a house fire by a group of firefighters in his hometown, and because of that incident had a lifelong interest in promoting the welfare of firefighters in general and promoting the