

Medicare system solvent. They may say that, but again, do not let them fool you, and do not buy it, the way you did not buy it in the last go-round.

The money that is being cut is not going to be put back into the Medicare trust fund. Once again, it is going to pay for tax breaks. The President proposed extending the solvency of Medicare for the same amount of time without making the same deep cuts in the Medicare system.

They are using the money from these Medicare cuts to fund \$176 billion in unnecessary tax breaks.

If you want to know the real agenda of the Republican leadership on Medicare, all you need to do is to recall the words of House Speaker NEWT GINGRICH on Medicare not too many months ago. Not years ago, but not too many months ago. The Speaker said, "Now we don't get rid of it in round one, because we don't think that is the politically smart thing to do, and we do not think that is the right way to go through a transition. But we believe it is going to wither on the vine, because we think people are voluntarily going to leave it."

The majority leader of the other body said that he was proud to have voted in 1965 against Medicare because "it is a system that does not work." These people truly believe that Medicare is a wrong system, a bad system, and that it needs to be destroyed. Do not let them kid you in the direction they want to take the Medicare system. That is what the Republicans really want to do to Medicare. They want it to wither on the vine.

The Republican assault on health care for seniors does not stop with Medicare. In their budget they also propose cutting Medicaid by \$72 billion. That cut, combined with the block grant approach, will jeopardize the guarantee of coverage for folks who are in nursing homes. Most people do not understand what Medicaid is about. It is seniors who are in nursing homes that Medicaid covers.

In addition to cuts in Medicare and Medicaid, they propose including risky medical savings accounts in the Medicare system, a system that would allow wealthy seniors to operate out of the Medicare system, thereby weakening the program, allowing those who are most ill, most frail, to stay in traditional insurance programs, driving those premiums up, and not allowing people to be able to get health care.

To sum up, what this new Republican budget amounts to is yet another assault on the health care system for our Nation's seniors. Unless they withdraw this budget and rework their proposals, I expect that they will ignite, and I certainly hope they do, the same firestorm that forced their retreat last year. Their proposal is wrong and irresponsible.

ALASKAN OIL SALES RESPONSIBLE FOR GASOLINE PRICE HIKES

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

Mr. METCALF. Mr. Speaker, last week the President of the United States ordered oil to be pumped from the strategic petroleum reserve in an effort to counter rising gasoline prices. What is behind all this? Why are gasoline prices soaring, and why now? Why are price increases most dramatic on the West Coast?

Many factors can impact the price of oil. In this case, two Government actions are pushing up the price of gasoline. First, of course, the President's gas tax is making a bad situation worse. The gas tax hits the low-income working families the hardest and should be repealed immediately.

But just last week, at the same time that he ordered additional oil out of our strategic reserves, the President authorized the export of Alaskan oil to Asia. At a time when gas prices are soaring, he chose to send United States gasoline to Asian nations instead of to American consumers.

We had a ban on exporting Alaskan oil. The ban was part of an agreement that allowed the building of the pipeline in the first place. In fact, the pipeline would not have been built without that agreement. This agreement should never have been broken. As we face soaring oil prices at home, we are preparing to reduce domestic supplies of oil by shipping it overseas.

I saw it coming. Everyone should have seen this coming. During congressional consideration of that legislation to end the ban on export of Alaskan oil, I vigorously warned of higher gasoline prices, opposing even members of my own party. The majority of Congress argued that if we allow this oil to be exported, higher prices will be charged, with the result of revenue increase to the Treasury. But higher oil prices mean higher gasoline prices. That is not very complicated. It does not take a rocket scientist to figure that out. Legislation was then passed allowing the President to export the oil at his discretion.

Did not the Congress and the President realize that reducing the oil supply from Alaska would dramatically raise gas prices, especially on the West Coast? Of course price increases in the United States were sure to follow, as markets reacted in anticipation of falling supply and increasing demand.

The President's decisions contradict each other. He is opening the strategic petroleum reserve to lower the price of oil. At the same time this President allows shipments of American oil to Asian consumers. He is making the problem worse than it needs to be, and, as usual, working people and their families are paying the price.

It makes no sense to release our strategic reserves at the same time we are

exporting needed Alaskan oil. Mr. President, please be consistent and stop playing politics with the price of gasoline.

TRIBUTE TO THOSE INVOLVED IN THE SEARCH FOR WILLIAM E. COLBY

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

Mr. HOYER. Mr. Speaker, all of Washington and the Nation watched over some 7 days as America wondered what happened to the former Director of the CIA, William Colby. William Colby served his country in war and in peace. He served it with integrity and with commitment.

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Tragically, his body was found 7 days after his canoe was discovered. He had drowned.

I had the opportunity of talking to his widow, Sally Shelton Colby, and when I talked to her, she was thankful for the volunteers and paid personnel of so many agencies who had throughout her vigil exercised their skill and their judgment in the search for an answer to why he was missing.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the efforts of more than 100 individuals, both paid and volunteer, who spent many hours in the cold waters and on the shoreline of the Wicomico River searching for the late William Colby.

The search ended early Monday morning after his body was discovered near the shoreline, ending, Mr. Speaker, an intense search that began on the 28th of April. There were many agencies and organizations involved in the search, as is always the case when neighbors get in trouble. That search was headed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Police. They did an outstanding job, and I want to recognize not only them but all the participants in this search, including the sheriff of Charles County, MD, Fred Davis, and the men and women of the Charles County Sheriff's Department who handled press inquiries, protected the Colby residence, and facilitated in the search.

The search involved countless volunteer hours and assistance from the Maryland State Police, aviation division; the Charles County dive team, who were the first divers in the search; the Cobb Island Volunteer Fire Department and emergency medical team; the 7th District Volunteer Fire Department, Boat 5 from the home county of myself, St. Mary's County; the Marbury Volunteer Fire Department, using their rescue boat and dive team; the Bel Alton Volunteer Fire Department; the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Department dive team, led by Sheriff Voorhaar; the Calvert County dive team; the U.S. Coast Guard; the Prince George's County dive team, Companies

22, 49, and 56; the LaPlata Volunteer Fire Department; the Sardom search and rescue dogs; the Cobb Island Volunteer Fire Department Ladies Auxiliary.

Let me stop at the Cobb Island Ladies Auxiliary. I had the opportunity to talk to Gilda Farrell Wednesday night. Talked to her about the efforts of herself and the members of the auxiliary, and told her that Sally Shelton Colby expressed to me how persons who did not know her or her family were so warm in a time of crisis, were so uplifting at a time of tragedy, and how they had related to the entire Colby family at this time and given them comfort as well as aid.

In addition, the Charles County Communications Department; the Virginia State Marine Police; the Naval Surface Warfare Center EOD dive team and the rescue squad dive team from Dahlgren, VA; and numerous local citizens who volunteered in many, many different ways.

I ask my colleagues to join me today in recognizing the efforts of the paid and volunteer members of this very special community. These individuals engage in hundreds of hours of specialized training and continuing education to enhance life-saving skills, just to be ready for emergency rescue calls and searches. Charles County and other communities across America benefit daily from the services of these dedicated professionals who are ready 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and they deserve our continued thanks.

Mr. Speaker, I know that you share my pride at the efforts of the volunteer fire and rescue service personnel and other agencies involved in the intense search for Mr. Colby, which lasted more than 7 days.

ADMINISTRATION'S FAILURE TO DEAL EFFECTIVELY WITH INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS

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

Mr. WOLF. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on the matter of human rights. Perhaps the most basic of these rights is just to be able to exist or to live. And I am compelled to speak on America's role in protecting and promoting these basic rights.

Like it or not, we are the nation to which the world turns for leadership and direction, especially in the area of human rights. Quite frankly, our Government is just not doing a good job here. It isn't measuring up.

The administration has failed to exercise leadership all around the globe in the area of human rights. There has been a total collapse of will, of spine, of backbone in dealing with terrible things happening to people in every corner of the world. Events that we could alter—that we, in the past, have altered—by standing up to tough guy

dictators who treat their own with brutality and terrorism.

I wish it wasn't necessary to talk about this right now because this is the campaign season and honest criticism and frustration are sometimes discounted as just more candidate bashing. But I'm not bashing the administration. I want President Clinton to succeed in promoting human rights. In his State of the Union Speech on January 25, 1994, he stood right there and said "as we build a more constructive relationship with China, we must continue to insist on clear signs of improvement in that nation's human rights record." I alone arose from my seat over there to applaud his courageous intentions.

But he didn't follow through. And the men and women in China are worse off today for our failure to lead. Just as the men and women in southern Sudan are worse off, and the Nagorno-Karabach, Turkey, Tibet, Burundi, even Vietnam and elsewhere. But this afternoon, I want to focus on Chechnya, a fractious part of the Russian Federation of States, which I visited last year, and where unbelievably brutal events are unfolding. Chechnya could be the catalyst that results in a Russian Federation dominated by communism again.

It should have been enough to count the dead men, women, and children to see something must be done about Chechnya. But if it were not, it should then be enough to also see the villages and hamlets across the land that have been ravaged. But if that were still not enough add the once thriving capital city of Grozny which has been leveled, where few buildings remain standing; only hollow skeletons amid huge piles of rubble. That scene surely calls for remedy.

To give the administration some credit, perhaps they wanted to do something helpful there. But faulty and sporadic rhetoric have only made things worse. At one point the administration said Chechnya is an internal or civil problem. Russia then took this to mean that we would look the other way while they embarked on an effort to crush Chechnya. When the tragedy of war became too apparent to bear in silence, our Government began to urge President Yeltsin to bring this conflict to an end. Each time a high level delegation from the United States, either the President, Secretary of State or other high official, was scheduled to meet with the Yeltsin government, they would intensify their war effort to crush the Chechens hoping to claim the problem had been solved and peace is being restored even before our Government delegation arrived and could raise the issue.

This cat and mouse brand of diplomacy had the effect of ratcheting up the killing and bombing and shelling. And more Chechens died. But more Russian soldiers continued to die as well. The Chechens are fierce fighters and good soldiers comfortable in their

homeland which they know like the back of their hand. They, too, can be ruthless and are not pushovers. They have taken a grueling toll on the Russian troops. This, coupled with the hemorrhage of rubles to wage this war, the humiliating realization by the Russian people that their army may be only a paper tiger that cannot over-run even tiny Chechnya, and the stinging negative world opinion showering down on the Yeltsin government, has made this a key issue in the upcoming June elections.

What is at stake in these elections is the soul of Russia. And the major candidates to control its soul are President Boris Yeltsin on one hand and the Communist leaders on the other. President Yeltsin himself has said he may not win re-election if the Chechnya war continues. Let me say that again. The Russian people, tired of and embarrassed by the war in Chechnya, could turn away from President Yeltsin and re-embrace communism as, perhaps, the lesser among evils.

Russia could return to communism as we stand idly, too timid or too confused to force the Chechen issue. Now I absolutely do not suggest this is something which should involve U.S. forces. That would clearly be irresponsible. What we have is two belligerents engaged in a struggle which neither side knows how to end. Like two feuding family members unable and unwilling to stop fighting even when both recognize continuing conflict is worse than any resolution available. Sometimes it takes an outsider to demand a truce. I don't want to trivialize this conflict but it is not unlike two small boys whaling away at one another and both are secretly delighted when someone steps between them.

I have, again and again, written the President and others in his administration—and Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to insert in the RECORD copies of these letters—urging that our Government offer and encourage both sides, Russian and Chechen, to accept the offer of an American statesman of high stature and achievement to help search for peace. A broker or negotiator or arbitrator—choose a title—but someone with wisdom, experience and diplomacy to help find an accord where neither side is a loser, killing and destruction end and people can begin rebuilding lives. The administration barely even acknowledges my letters, which would be OK if they were pursuing another workable outcome. They are not. They again arrange a high level meeting with the Yeltsin government which spurs the Russians toward a renewed offensive to stamp out the Chechens. More killing and destruction result; time passes; frustration and bitterness grow and the cycle begins anew.

This is not diplomacy. This is not international leadership. This is folly. It seems that our Government is abdicating its role as a world leader. A role no other power can assume. And the