

a question of spending the money smarter.

But strengthening Medicare financially is not enough. Washington has a way of making everything it touches more expensive, more complicated, and more difficult for Americans to understand. That too must change. The Medicare paperwork is overwhelming. We need to simplify the Medicare system so that seniors can read the bills and interact effectively with their doctors and hospitals. We have to end Washington mismanagement, and end it now.

But even that is still not enough. Too many seniors have told me that their Medicare coverage is inadequate. It does not cover prescription drugs or eyeglasses. Seniors should be in charge, not the Washington bureaucracy. Seniors should have the right to choose the health care plan that suits them best, and no Washington bureaucrat should have the ability to deny them that choice. Remember, every dollar that is spent on the Washington bureaucracy is a dollar that cannot go to health care for seniors.

And that also means an end to all the abuse, fraud, and waste in the Medicare system. Under the Republican plan, doctors and hospitals that abuse the Medicare system will not get a slap on the wrist. They will be punished—legally and financially. Washington may not have been serious about fighting abuse, fraud and waste, but Republicans are.

It is our responsibility to strengthen Medicare financially so that it does not go bankrupt now or in the future. It is our responsibility to simplify Medicare so that every recipient will understand and be able to use the system easily. It is our responsibility to fight the waste, fraud and abuse in the Medicare system. In short, it is our responsibility to find a solution for Medicare for the next generation, not just the next election.

I will fight for the right of every senior citizen in every district across America to get the facts. I will demand that the Medicare trustees and the White House make available to every American the exact financial details about Medicare. The President may not like it, but I believe the people who pay the bills have a right to know exactly what I know. You have a right to know the facts about Medicare. After all, it is your money.

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CRISIS IN MEDICARE

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

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to follow my friend from Minnesota, Mr. GUTKNECHT, to talk about the Medicare crisis in America. It is a crisis. It is upon us. The Medicare system is not about to go bankrupt, it will

not soon go bankrupt, it is already falling into bankruptcy.

The first quarter of this year, unexpectedly the Medicare system began slipping into bankruptcy. What does that mean? It means that the money coming into the system from your and my taxes is not enough to cover the money going out of the system, going out to pay the bills of seniors who need Medicare coverage.

Why is there not enough money in the system? Is it because we are not paying enough taxes? No, it is because Medicare costs are running at three times the rate of inflation. The waste, fraud, and abuse is about to ruin a system critical to American seniors, my mother included.

Mom just got out of the hospital in January, again from another serious problem. She has survived cancer twice. Last month she played in the Senior Olympics at home and won 5 medals—3 silver and two gold—one in javelin and one in shot put. She is a miracle.

But Medicare has saved my mother, and it has saved countless of other mothers, fathers, grandparents of Members of this House and of citizens all over this country. Can we afford to let Medicare go bankrupt? I say no.

Is it fair for anyone to scare seniors into resisting changes to reform Medicare to make it work? Is it fair to seniors to keep scaring them with Medicare cut language? The truth is if somebody does not fix Medicare soon, we will face three choices very soon.

First, we will have to choose between not taking care of our seniors anymore—and we will not make that choice, we will always take care of our seniors in America. Or, second, we will have to choose to tax the dickens out of the younger generation, to double their payroll taxes to put more money in this bucket that has got a hole in it. Or, third, we are going to have to borrow and borrow and borrow on future generations to cover the bankruptcy that is upon us in Medicare.

The biggest enemy of seniors in America is not those of us who are trying to fix Medicare, who are trying to give seniors more choices, who are trying to cut the waste, the fraud, the bureaucratic abuse, the mess we have in this system. The biggest enemy to Medicare and to seniors is not the Republican Party and those of us who have offered a plan to fix it.

The biggest enemy of our seniors, the biggest enemy of Medicare is anyone who will try to scare seniors into doing nothing, because to do nothing means we face one of those three awful choices: to borrow our whole country into bankruptcy, to tax the dickens out of future generations, or to give up caring for our seniors, none of which are good options.

We want to continue a sound and strong Medicare system for America's seniors, but to do so will take some courage around this place. It will take someone willing to say it is time to fix

a problem before it goes bankrupt. It will take someone willing, literally in the White House, to address this issue instead of trying to scare seniors into believing that everybody is trying to cut their benefits or cut their program. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The truth is Medicare is already going bankrupt as we speak tonight. If we do not show some courage around this place and fix that system for our seniors, if someone in the White House does not join us instead of trying to scare seniors across America, Medicare will indeed fail the seniors who depend upon it, my mother included.

If all of you love your parents and your grandparents, as I know you must, as much as I love mine, then can we not join together and fix this problem while there is still a chance to fix it? Do we have to resort to partisan tactics and scare tactics just to resist each other politically? Or can we look beyond these political boundaries and fix the Medicare system for the seniors of our country, and preserve our children's opportunities to earn a decent living for themselves without getting taxed into oblivion?

Those are the hard choices we face, but I came here to make hard choices. I came here to tell the truth and to face the difficult problems we have. This is one of the most difficult ones we have.

Anybody who will scare seniors instead of facing this tough and difficult problem and curing the Medicare problems, taking care of the waste, fraud, and abuse that is ripping this system apart, anyone who is willing to scare seniors instead of doing that does not deserve to be reelected to any office in this land. Anyone who is willing to work for seniors, to repair the Medicare system, indeed deserves their trust and their confidence. It comes down to that.

Do we have faith enough in each other, in our purpose here in Washington, to serve this Nation and to do the right thing for those who sent us here, to put partisan attacks and scare tactics behind us? I think we can and I think we should, but it will take someone in the White House to show a little more courage and a little less partisanship.

THE TAX TRAP

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

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, as I travel around the first district of Georgia I meet a lot of people—in Savannah, Brunswick, Statesboro and also in the smaller towns like Odum, Reidsville, Glennville—and basically wherever I am having town meetings, they are always asking the same questions; Why are so many families across America struggling to keep their heads above water? Why are Americans working harder and harder and having less

to show for it? Why is it that many people, many families, have to have two jobs just to make ends meet?

I think we can summarize everything in two words: the tax trap. It is simple to explain. It is simply this: the harder you work, the more taxes Washington makes you pay. The more taxes you pay, the longer and harder you have to work. You end up working harder and longer, and Washington ends up with more but you end up with less.

It is like the old doodle bugs we used to catch when we were kids, Mr. Speaker. The doodle bug builds a cylindrical trap. Ants come walking by and they fall into the cylindrical trap, and then they try to dig themselves out. The harder the ant digs, the more dirt falls on the ant. Then that doodle bug is just sitting there with his pinchers ready and his mouth wide open, and when that ant is exhausted, the doodle bug comes up, grabs him, and sucks him on down.

That is what is happening to middle-class America right now. We are just working harder and harder, trying to get out of this big trap set by the Washington bureaucracy, and Washington, just like the doodle bug, is winning.

When I was a child, Mr. Speaker, the biggest investment a family made was the family home, but today it is taxes. We send more money to the tax collector than we spend on food, clothing, and shelter combined.

My parents grew up in an America that promised that if they worked hard and saved and did the right thing, you too could enjoy the American dream. But today children in my generation and the many generations coming after me are afraid they are not going to be able to share in that American dream.

The Washington bureaucracy, though, has enjoyed it. They have enjoyed this fruits of our labor. Today the bureaucracy in Washington has grown to an all-time high. Our Government alone costs us \$1.6 trillion a year, Mr. Speaker. It is way out of control. It has 160 different Federal job training programs, 240 different Federal education programs, 300 economic development programs, and 500 urban aid programs. How much is enough, Mr. Speaker? The fact is all these programs are probably well-intended, but they take money off the table of middle-class America.

Look at the President of the United States. He ran under a promise of a middle-class tax cut and instead passed the largest tax increase in the history of the country. Today, because of President Clinton's policy, the typical family pays \$2,600 more in taxes than they did on election day 1992—and think about the insecurity the middle-class Americans have.

I think about Karen Goddard. Karen and I worked together for about 10 years. Karen and Ian had 2 incomes and they had 4 kids. Despite the fact that they worked hard, it was very difficult to get those kids' college education

paid for, even though they had done everything right, Mr. Speaker, it still did not matter.

I think about people like Charles Sieler and Tracy Smith, who are going to be getting married in July. Once they get married, Mr. Speaker, their tax burden will become higher than it is individually because of their horrible marriage tax penalty where we actually tax people more once they are married than they were as single people before them.

I think about people of my dad's generation and—now I am getting up there, I am 41 years old; my dad and his friends, my old teachers, my Sunday school teacher, the people who used to drive me to Little League, and the people who used to drive me to the Dairy Queen on hot Sunday afternoons—elder senior Americans that I have known all my life. Now it is their turn to retire and enjoy the fruits of their labor, but they are not sure that Medicare is going to be there tomorrow and all of them are on Medicare, Mr. Speaker.

We have got to have fundamental changes in Washington, because our policies affect real people with real problems. This tax trap, Mr. Speaker, is really sucking us all in. We have got to break free of it. I believe we have to have fundamental reform in Washington. We have to change our education system, to put more local autonomy in the program. We need to have legal reform. We need to change the Washington bureaucracy. We need to have a health care plan that is more affordable and more accessible.

Mr. Speaker, these are the policies this Congress is moving toward. We need to continue these reforms. I am proud to work on them.

SYSTEM IN NEED OF CHANGE

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

Mr. NEY. Mr. Speaker, today down in Bellaire, OH, a town in my district, something was said to me at Rogers Barber Shop that is said virtually every single day in my district as I go about talking to people. That was from a constituent who said, "You've got to balance the Nation's budget, you've got to do it for the children, we've got to do it now."

Then that gentleman proceeded to talk about how in fact he had opportunity when he was being raised down in the Ohio valley. I stop to think about it, and hardly a day goes by that I do not have a young couple that comes up to me and tells me that they wonder about their future and the future of their children.

Mr. Speaker, I would have to ask a few questions. Why are so many families struggling to keep their heads above water? Why has it become so difficult for families in this country to make it? I believe that we can summarize it in the 3 words that has been said

best by my colleague from Georgia, the tax trap. It is the tax trap on working American men and women. It is a cycle. It is a vicious cycle. It is never ending on people in this country, Mr. Speaker.

Some people believe that the answer lies in Washington DC. It does not. For decades Washington, DC has told the American people that everything is okay while it continued to spend the inheritance of children and undermine their very future.

As I went around my district and did a lot of Memorial Day events with our fine veterans, I saw a lot of young people, Mr. Speaker. I looked at my own children, Bobby and Kayla, wondering what opportunity they are going to have, wondering what opportunity other young people are going to have in this country. I wonder if they are going to have the same kind of opportunity I had when I was raised 41 years ago, when a debt was not hung upon my neck to pay, unlike today. A child born today in this country is going to owe \$187,000 over their working lifetime to pay for the past spending habits of this room.

That is not right, it is not fair, and it is not morally correct to do that to young people, Mr. Speaker.

Every day working families who have been so hard hit in the 18th Congressional District of Ohio as they have across this country, especially in the industrialized areas that were ravaged by the bureaucrats in this Government and by the overspending of Washington, every single day those working people have to sit down at their dinner table and they have to balance their budget, and Washington did not. That is the problem, Mr. Speaker. Past tax-and-spend policies are not the way to provide opportunity for working people.

And people have insecurity these days. I can only think of the married couple that wants to buy that piece of the American dream, the home. I can only think of the thirtysomethings who are accumulating debt that they cannot pay. I can only think about the couples in their forties and fifties who are desperately trying to do the right thing and save for their future, and I think of America's seniors, America's seniors who paid their dues and who deserve the best and deserve for Medicare to be their for them.

Those are the Americans that I can think of. Those are the real people. Not inside the Beltway in Washington, Mr. Speaker, but the real people that every single day have to go out and earn a living and have to provide opportunity for their families.

It is not right what has been done in Washington. Enough is enough. It is time to draw the line in the sand. It is time to give people back their ability to control their destiny.

Mr. Speaker, corporate America also needs to produce a healthy environment and healthy bottom line for working Americans. Corporate America needs to be involved in job training,