

[Mr. KINGSTON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

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

[Mr. GEKAS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I am in the well tonight because I feel very strongly that myself, the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO], the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. KLINK] and others that are going to be joining us here tonight, Democrats, spent a lot of time last year as well as this year as part of basically an effort to try to make the point, and I believe successfully made the point that the Republican leadership in this Congress was trying to destroy Medicare as we know it.

Democrats basically started Medicare over 30 years ago, Democratic Presidents, Democratic Congresses, because they were concerned that so many senior citizens did not have health care, either were not able to afford health insurance or found themselves unable to obtain health insurance as they became senior citizens. Over the last 30 years, Medicare has been very successful as a program in guaranteeing that almost all, almost 100 percent of the senior citizens in this country get health care and get good health care.

It is not only a question of the fact that they are covered by Medicare but they have a choice of physicians, they have a choice of hospitals and the level of coverage, what is included in their coverage, as well as the quality of care that they receive generally is pretty good. That is a dramatic change from the situation before Medicare existed.

Well, as my colleagues know, we faced a new Congress back in January of 1995 under the Republican leadership. One of the first things, and I have to admit I was very surprised, one of the first things that happened was that a budget was presented which essentially cut Medicare as well as Medicaid drastically, primarily to pay for tax cuts for tax breaks, if you will, mostly for wealthy Americans.

But the proposals that came from the Republican leadership did not just cut Medicare, did not just cut the amount of money that was going into Medicare, they also tried to change the system dramatically so that senior citizens would not have a choice of doctors. Many would be pushed into managed

care. Many would also find that they had to pay higher out-of-pocket costs because their part B premiums would go up or because they would have to pay more as a copayment to their physician.

What we saw is, as I said, a dramatic change in the structure of Medicare as well as drastic cuts in the amount of money that would go into the program. We fought hard against these Republican proposals, and we were successful. The Medicare program is today still the way it was 2 years ago. The dramatic cuts have not been implemented, and I suppose not surprisingly, because the Republican leadership realized at some point over the last 18 months that this was not working and that we were getting the message across, if you will, to the American public that this is what the Republican leadership wanted to do.

All of a sudden, we see where the Republicans do not want to talk about Medicare anymore. They sort of pretend like all these debates and all these votes, these many times when they tried to cut it and change it, never occurred. So I was not surprised that last week 3 House Republican leaders held a press conference, last Wednesday, to basically discuss the new ads that the AFL-CIO has been putting on the air in various parts of the country where they point out that Speaker GINGRICH and other Republican leaders were pushing for these Medicare cuts and basically changing. I would say actually destroying Medicare as we know it.

□ 1945

The Republican leaders basically got up and said, oh, those things are not true, we never tried to do that. Well, let me tell Members that they did and regardless of their rhetoric, the old statement "Actions speak louder than words," well, the fact is the actions do speak louder than words in this case.

Whatever the Republicans say now, the bottom line is that after taking control of Congress, NEWT GINGRICH and the Republicans set themselves to the task of slashing Medicare by \$270 billion. If this Congress had passed and the President had signed, which we did not, their Medicare bill, seniors would have been forced out of traditional Medicare by making it prohibitively expensive to stay in the program. They would have been forced. Basically, they would have lost the choice, I should say, of their doctors and hospitals because essentially they would have been forced into managed care where they did not have the choice of doctors and hospitals.

I do not think anybody really should be surprised by this because we know well that it took something like 13 years for Democrats to overcome Republican opposition and enact the Medicare Program on July 30, 1965. And in 1965, 93 percent of the House Republicans, including then Representative Bob Dole, now the Republican candidate for President, voted for a sub-

stitute that would have killed Medicare as we know it. Over 60 percent of Republican Senators voted for a similar substitute.

So we know historically the Republicans were opposed to Medicare, they continued that effort when they took back the majority in this Congress, and regardless of what the Speaker or the now Presidential candidate Bob Dole says, the bottom line is that they have over the years consistently tried to either stop Medicare from becoming law or change it dramatically in a most negative way.

I would like to now yield to the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] who really has been outspoken on this issue from the very beginning and really led the whole battle to make sure that we retain Medicare as it is and not make the drastic changes that the Republican leadership proposed.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from New Jersey for taking the special order tonight because in fact the whole issue of Medicare is critically important to this Nation. I think, and I know my colleague from New Jersey feels this way and our other colleagues who are here tonight, the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. KLINK] and the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. DURBIN], also feel the same way, that Medicare represents not a program but in fact what our values are in this country, in that it says to people who have worked hard all of their lives, who have played by the rules, who have raised their families, who have contributed to the successful economy of this Nation, that when you retire and when you are a senior citizen that you will have a safe and a dignified and a decent retirement and that you will be able to have health care.

I thank my colleague from New Jersey for his efforts in talking about Medicare and also about health care for seniors in this country. He has led the fight on that issue and I thank him for laying out the fact that it used to be in 1946, or before Medicare that we did not have the opportunity for seniors to have health care. That meant that families had to take in their mothers or fathers or their loved ones and somehow work out health care and was not clear how that was going to get paid for. With the advent of Medicare and today in 1996, we are looking at 99 percent of seniors who are covered.

Let me just go back for a second because it was not 1946, but before Medicare only 46 percent of seniors had health care coverage. So Medicare has meant a difference in the lives of seniors today, and it is something they come to count on, and not as a handout but something that they have paid for and that is there for them now.

But I think it is very interesting that in this Congress, as has been pointed out, that there is a war that is being waged on Medicare. The Republican leadership, with the House Speaker NEWT GINGRICH at the helm, is truly

bent on dismantling Medicare, and I think it is worth repeating the quote that the Speaker made some months ago that, and this is what he said: "Now we don't want to get rid of it in round one because we don't think that 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."

Now, after the wither on the vine quote appeared in various media accounts, Mr. GINGRICH's spokesman, Tony Blankley, was questioned on the accuracy of the quote, which they are now trying to run away from. They cannot move away from the quote fast enough. But NEWT GINGRICH's spokesman, Tony Blankley, was questioned on the accuracy of the quote. On October 26, 1995, Gingrich spokesman Tony Blankley confirmed GINGRICH's statement to the Los Angeles Times. Blankley said that GINGRICH's comments were "consistent with the Republican belief that most seniors would voluntarily choose to leave the traditional Medicare fee-for-service system in favor of health maintenance organizations and other managed care networks. It will mean the end of the system as most seniors know it."

These are words that are not made up. This is a direct quote from Tony Blankley. And yet the Republican leadership, the Republican National Committee, are currently objecting to a hard-hitting ad campaign, and I concur it is a hard-hitting campaign, as it should be, which is running across the country that highlights their position on cutting Medicare, and they are running as fast as they can away from these quotes.

I just point out what my colleague said about the then representative Dole. He prides himself on being 1 of 12 to have voted against Medicare and has said within recent months how proud he is of that vote. Well, I will tell you, people can run but they cannot hide. You cannot hide from the record and quite frankly, the record stinks. It really does.

I will make one point on what has been said about now in his revisionist history on this quote about withering on the vine that in fact he did not mean Medicare, but something called the Health Care Financing Administration. But it is hard to understand how individuals, except perhaps the employees, could leave an agency. This is ridiculous, people do not do that. If the employees of the agency leave, what has been implied all along, that it was the Medicare system that people were going to leave, that is what this is about. These are individuals who have a record, truly a record of being opposed to Medicare, and now they ask for the country to put their faith and their trust in people who had been willing to dismantle this operation.

I just make a final point, I know my other colleagues want to get into the discussion, the 1997 Republican budget

reflects the fact that they do in fact want to see Medicare dismantled and turned into something else with a proposal of \$168 billion in Medicare cuts over the next 6 years. We have been through this time and time again, and when we look at what they want to do with the \$168 billion, this year it is \$168 billion, last year it was \$270 billion, they talk about having moderated. But if you take a look at this, the \$270 billion cut would have been a 19 percent cut from Medicare; this time it is a 17 percent cut. So it is really the same numbers, if you will, and it is no coincidence that what they want to try to do with this money is to pay for tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans. Last year it was \$245 billion in tax cuts, this year it is \$176 or \$180 billion in tax breaks for the wealthy.

As I said, they can run but they cannot hide from the comments that they have made in the past and in the most recent past about how they want to see this system go away and take away from seniors in this country something that they have come to recognize as helpful to them in being able to truly survive in their older years and something that they deserve, a sacred trust if you will, that we committed to when this system was put in place.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for allowing me to participate in this effort this evening.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman and just, if I could, briefly comment on what the gentlewoman said when she raised again the quote from Speaker GINGRICH about Medicare withering on the vine. It is amazing to me how he can now suggest that somehow that statement was only meant to be applicable to the fact that they were changing Medicare to force people into managed care, as opposed to the traditional fee-for-service system, because it seems to me that is exactly the context in which the program would wither on the vine.

If you take away a lot of the money from Medicare and make the significant cuts that the Republicans have proposed, then the quality of care has to suffer because there is not going to be the money available to provide the level of services and the quality of services that Medicare now provides. If you force everyone into managed care, or you make managed care cheaper than the traditional fee-for-service system where you can choose your own doctor and then so many people do not have a choice of doctor anymore, then the reality is that Medicare has changed and does begin to wither on the vine. More and more people will find it necessary to supplement the program if they can afford it, which a lot of them cannot, in order to be able to have their own doctor.

So it does wither on the vine. That is exactly what the quote was meant to say, and that is exactly what they were doing.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield now to the gentleman from Pennsylvania [Mr. KLINK].

Mr. KLINK. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE]. A lot has been made about whether or not this ad has been taken out of context, and some letters from the Republicans to various television station managers have threatened them that there was going to be a libel suit, there was going to be legal action if they did not pull these ads that are being run by the AFL-CIO.

Now why, you might ask, Mr. Speaker, is the AFL-CIO being involved? Well, they are involved because they represent the labor unions that represent the working people of this Nation, people who have played by the rules, working men and women who get up early every morning, they go to work, they perform a task, they pay into pension funds, they pay their taxes, and they are told Medicare will be there for you when you retire. Medicaid will be there if you need to go to a nursing home and you fall within the earning abilities to have Medicaid pay for that nursing home care. But now they are seeing that there is a majority party, the Republicans, who want to see this wither on the vine.

So the AFL-CIO said, look, the corporate interests of this country and their PAC's have spent hundreds of millions of dollars in promoting the Republican line. Let labor weigh in with a \$35 million buy-in and let us inform the voters what our position is on this. The Republicans have said, no, we do not want this. They are running away, as my colleagues have said, from the NEWT GINGRICH quote saying that no, he was talking about HCFA, the Federal Health Care Finance Administration that administers Medicare and Medicaid. Well, let me read the quote, Mr. Speaker, and let Members and let everyone else in the shot of my voice decide what is taken out of context.

The Speaker said: "Now let me talk a little bit about Medicare. Let me start at the vision level so you understand how radically different we are and why it's so hard for the press corps to cover us."

Speaker GINGRICH continued as he was speaking to an audience from Blue Cross and Blue Shield. He said: "Medicare is the 1964 Blue Cross plan codified into law by Lyndon Johnson and it is about what you'd—I mean, if you went out into the marketplace tomorrow morning and said 'Hi, I've got a 1964 Blue Cross plan.' I'll let you decide how competitive you'd be. But I don't think very."

Speaker GINGRICH continued to say: "So what we're trying to do, first of all, is say, O.K., here is a Government monopoly plan. We're designing a free-market plan," he says and he is obviously referring to Medicare and Medicaid because that is all he has talked about so far, has not mentioned HCFA."

Then the Speaker continues: "Now they're very different models. You

know, we tell Boris Yeltsin, 'Get rid of centralized command bureaucracies. Go to the marketplace.'"

And then finally Speaker GINGRICH does refer to the Health Care Financing Administration. He says: "O.K., what do you think the Health Care Financing Administration is? It is a centralized command bureaucracy. It is everything we are telling Boris Yeltsin to get rid of. Now, we don't get rid of it in round one because we don't think that's politically smart and we don't think that's the right way to go through a transition, but we believe it's going to wither on the vine because we think people are voluntarily going to leave it—voluntarily."

Now, voluntary leave HCFA or voluntarily leave Medicare?

□ 2000

You cannot leave HCFA unless you work for the agency. And on this assumption the Republican leadership is going out with their lawyers writing to television stations and saying pull those ads. How dare the AFL-CIO tell the people of this country what the Republican Congressmen have been voting to do?

How dare they not? It is their duty. When people play by the rules, it is our duty to tell them that we have changed the rules or that we have one party or the other that wants to change the rules, and that party is the majority party.

Now, we understand in this country, and we hear on the floor of the House a lot of talk about Christian morals. We hear a lot of talk about patriotism. I am reminded of a quote by John Foster Dulles, who once said, and I will paraphrase but I am very close, he said something about this country would be in very poor condition if we only saved for the battlefield the strongest human qualities.

I think he was talking about the qualities of selflessness, of patriotism and caring and bravery, all of the things that we view as important on the battlefield to somebody who is a patriot.

But what he said is we do not use those qualities only on the battlefield, we are to use them in our everyday life. How patriotic it would be, how Christian it would be to take care of our parents and our grandparents. How patriotic it would be and how Christian it would be to make sure that we did not punish children because their parents happened to be on welfare too long.

So we talk on one side of the Republican side about being patriotic and about having Christian values, and on the other hand the legislation that we attempt to cram down the throats of this Chamber and the people of this country is a completely different kind of legislation.

It is very clear to me that Speaker GINGRICH was talking about leaving Medicare wither and die on the vine, not the Health Care Financing Admin-

istration. The handful of people who work over there might leave voluntarily, I do not know that they are going to quit their jobs.

We are talking about a health care system designed in 1964 when 30 percent of our senior citizens were living in poverty because they had no health care. The corporations of this Nation did not voluntarily take care of people in their old age. They did not provide health care for them. They did not provide pensions for them in many instances. So we developed in 1934 a Social Security system to take care of people in their old age and to give them some money coming in.

In 1964, again in 1965, we created an insurance company and we called it Medicare. We also added Medicaid. And we said let us take care of the disabled and let us take care of the poor children and let us take care of these folks, also.

Now, 30 years later, the Republicans get control of the House. Very proud is Bob Dole, as my colleagues have said tonight, that he was 1 of 12 that did not vote for it. He was proud that he did not like Medicare back then. But why was Medicare created? Why was Social Security created? Why was the public school system created? It was created because the corporations and the robber barons were not educating the children of their workers.

All of these programs, the reason that we have all of this Government is because the corporations did not do these things voluntarily. So we the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union and to have domestic tranquility and to provide for other generations, both those who have passed and those who are coming up, have created programs of social safety nets.

I know that is an oft-used term we throw around, but it is true; it is what it is. We have these social safety nets, and they are there for a reason. Now the AFL-CIO, that represents roughly one in every five working people and is responsible for the fact that the workers of America today have many of the things they do have, is under attack.

We have various subcommittee chairmen and committee chairmen from the Republican side putting out press releases and holding hearings that are intimidating that, if you belong to a labor union, you are either, A, Communist or, B, you must belong to the mob. One or the other: You are either a Communist or you belong to the mob.

This gives me a problem. Now all of a sudden, and I will tell you, Mr. Speaker, I come from having been in broadcasting for 24 years. I worked for more than one or two radio and television stations. Now they are threatening the radio and television stations of this Nation, saying, if you carry this ad by the AFL-CIO, that which, by the way, does not have an actor reading Speaker GINGRICH's words, it takes Speaker GINGRICH saying his own words about what he wants to see Medicare

do, and that is to wither on the vine and to die. There is no question.

This is not something that is up for debate. For the leadership of the Republican Party to hold a press conference last week to try to create some kind of smoke screen is nothing more than that, it is a smoke screen and a very poor one. And the American people, Mr. Speaker, will see through it.

I yield back to my friend from New Jersey.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman. I want to say briefly I am so glad he pointed out how the Republican leadership is really trying to gag this whole issue and trying to go after the media and those stations that cover these ads. From the very beginning, and we have the gentleman from Michigan, Congressman STUPAK, and the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Congressman KLINK, who are also members of the Committee on Commerce with myself, and we can remember when Medicare, when this Republican Medicare proposal came before our committee, there was only one hearing. The Republican leadership did not want their proposed cuts and the changes in Medicare that they were proposing to be aired with the public. When the senior citizens showed up at the hearing, they were actually arrested.

Mr. KLINK. If the gentleman would yield on that point.

Mr. PALLONE. Certainly.

Mr. KLINK. I thank the gentleman for mentioning that, because 1 week earlier, in the same Committee on Commerce, the Committee on Commerce is a very important committee of the House of Representatives. We say it is the oldest committee in the Congress, and we are very proud to be there. We try to work on many issues and have worked on many issues in this committee: Telecommunications Act, securities reform. On many things we have worked in a bipartisan manner. The committee has traditionally worked in that respect.

A week earlier, if memory serves me, we had a senior citizens group come in that were in favor, supposedly, of the Republican changes to gut Medicare. They had bags of mail. They interrupted the committee hearing and dumped the bags of mail in support of the Republican Medicare, I call it the Medicare rape and pillage, but that is probably my own words; and nothing was said. Nothing was done.

However, when another group of senior citizens who were from the Washington, D.C., Virginia, Maryland area came in, the committee chairman ordered them to be arrested. The gentleman from Michigan, Mr. STUPAK, myself, the gentleman from Illinois Mr. RUSH, and the gentleman from Ohio, Mr. SHERROD BROWN, went with them. We said, if they were going to be arrested, we are going to go with them.

I want the gentleman to understand some of these people were in walkers, some in wheelchairs. Some had canes.

And they were going to arrest them? They did not disrupt as much as the previous group that had dumped the mail. But, see, they were in favor of what the chairman and the Republican majority wanted to do, and so we did not worry about that.

By the way, I might mention that a vast amount of the mail from the previous week that was dumped by the first group that was allowed to participate because they were in favor of what the Republicans were doing, we found out, was coming from people that either did not exist or were dead. So I guess dead people are in favor of what the Republicans want to do with Medicare because they do not need it anymore.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back.

Mr. PALLONE. And every one of you, I certainly know the gentlewoman from Connecticut and everyone else here, I believe, we were forced, because we could not get a hearing in order to tell the truth about what the Republicans were doing, we were forced to go out in the lawn in the rain, which was a memorable day to have a hearing, to tell the truth. So I see this almost as a first amendment issue.

The Republicans do not want the truth to be told. So they are now threatening the media, the way they threatened and tried to gag the people that came and tried to testify at the hearing. They just do not want the truth to come out.

I yield to the gentleman from Illinois.

Mr. DURBIN. I thank the gentleman for convening this special order and for yielding. The gentleman is undoubtedly aware, as all of us are, that we are 15 weeks away from the last day of campaigning in this election. Many of us are counting the days as they approach. I am sure many ordinary American citizens are counting for those days to end as well, but it is a significant election we now face in 1996.

I think, despite the fact that I am a candidate in the election, as all of us are, I think it is significant far beyond our personal involvement. I really believe this may be the starkest contrast, the clearest choice that American voters have faced since Franklin Delano Roosevelt ran against Herbert Hoover in 1932. I do not think there has been a time in our history beyond that year that we have had such a sharp contrast.

It is curious that 4 years ago, when there was a choice at the Presidential level, the American people were told they could continue the policies of George Bush or take a chance with the policies of Bill Clinton. Certainly Mr. Perot was in the race, but those were the two major candidates. There was a bit of risk-taking involved because those voting for Bill Clinton, Governor of Arkansas, really had to accept his platform and his promise. They did not know what he would actually do as President of the United States.

It took a leap of faith for them to elect Bill Clinton as President of the

United States and give him a chance to govern as the highest elected leader in this great Nation.

But it is a much different choice we face in 15 weeks. There is no leap of faith involved. We know exactly what the choices will be. We know what Bill Clinton and AL GORE have fought for. We know what the Democratic Party stands for. And we know very clearly on the issue of Medicare what the Republican leadership stands for.

If Bob Dole ends up being the nominee of his party, and there is some speculation he may not be, but I suspect he will be, if he ends up being the nominee of his party, can the voters trust Medicare with Bob Dole? Well, look back 31 years ago when Bob Dole sat on this very floor as a Member of the House of Representatives and in his judgment decided that the enactment of Medicare was a bad idea.

Now, many of us cast votes years ago that we would like to have over again and perhaps change, but Bob Dole is consistent. He recently said, when asked, it was the right vote to vote against Medicare. He knew it was not going to work.

So, here we have an unrepentant Bob Dole, voted against Medicare, who is seeking to become President of the United States and have the primary responsibility as President for the future of Medicare. Should this cause some concern and caution and pause among voters who worry about the future of Medicare? Well, I think so.

Let us assume for a moment that the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. NEWT GINGRICH, continues to be the putative leader of the Republican Party and asks to be Speaker again, if he has that opportunity at the 1996 election. Is there any question in anyone's mind on what he will do to Medicare? Well, we already know his game plan. He was totally unrepentant and said it was wither on the vine. He would cut \$270 billion out of Medicare in order to provide tax breaks for wealthy American people.

So those who are looking for a protector of Medicare in NEWT GINGRICH and the House Republicans had better keep looking. Unfortunately, on the other side of the rotunda, in the Senate, the Republican leadership is in lockstep with Mr. GINGRICH and his thinking.

So in 15 weeks the voters will have their last night and their last day and hour of deliberation before making what I think will be the most important choice, political choice in this half century, in this 1996 election. They will know what they can choose from: Bill Clinton, running for President, who vetoed the Gingrich-Dole cuts in Medicare, or the Gingrich-Dole team, which will come in and change Medicare and allow it to wither on the vine, as Mr. GINGRICH has said.

They will have a choice between Bill Clinton and his support for Medicaid, which is so important for poor children, disabled people, and elderly folks

in nursing homes, or they can turn to the Dole and Gingrich team which wanted to make massive cuts in Medicaid, cuts that really would have endangered the future of a lot of young people and elderly alike.

They can vote for Bill Clinton and AL GORE, who have supported college student loans, who are talking now about creative ways to help working families pay for college education, talking about the opportunities of education and training, or the Dole-Gingrich team.

And what did they propose? They continue to suggest cutting college student loans, making them more expensive for kids from middle-income families, make it more difficult for kids from families like my own to ever have a chance to go to college.

And finally they can look at the environmental protection. They know what Bill Clinton's record has been. They know what the Democrats have stood for in Congress. And they know very clearly what we are going to have if it is a Dole-Gingrich leadership on Capitol Hill and in Washington, DC, the same NEWT GINGRICH who proposed eliminating 14 environmental protection laws endangering the safety of the air we breathe and the water that we drink.

□ 2015

This is a stark contrast. Republicans are very proud of what they stand for. I admire their tenacity. They are going to stick with this no matter what. But I think the voters, and particularly moderate Republicans and independent voters, see through the Dole-Gingrich agenda.

I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for bringing up the issue of Medicare tonight. I think he focuses us on what our decision as a Nation will be in 15 weeks. It will be the most important decision of my lifetime, and I sincerely hope that the people of this country will stick the Clinton-Gore leadership and the Democratic leadership on Capitol Hill, to bring about the right kind of change, to not go too far, as Mr. Dole and Mr. GINGRICH have gone in their last year and a half together as a team here on Capitol Hill. I thank the gentleman for yielding this time.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Connecticut, Ms. DELAURO.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I want to just add onto something that my colleague from Illinois spoke about. That is, whom do you trust? Do you trust Bob Dole and his commentary about being proud to have voted against Medicare, and NEWT GINGRICH wanting it to wither on the vine?

Most recently in the publication "Roll Call" Morton Kondracke, a journalist, wrote in his column: "Asked whether Republicans will come back with a different agenda in 1997, the House majority whip, TOM DELAY, who was a Republican from Texas, told Morton Kondracke, this is a gentleman

who is third in charge of the House of Representatives," said, again, "We wouldn't change a thing, including the plan to reduce Medicare growth by \$270 billion over 6 years."

So the entire leadership, the entire leadership is bound and determined to see Medicare turned into something other than what it is now and the kinds of protections that it provides to seniors. This is not a passing moment, a past moment. This is a current moment, when we have the Gingrich-Dole leadership of this Congress in lockstep opposed to the Medicare system. Then they ask the American public to trust them with this program. How can it be?

I thank my colleague from Illinois for laying that out.

Mr. PALLONE. I think the gentleman is right. Just from talking to my own constituents, particularly this weekend, I think people understand that that is why they wanted President Clinton where he is, because they are concerned about the hurt that this Congress is doing, if you will, to the average American, particularly on the Medicare issue.

I yield to the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. STUPAK.

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for yielding to me.

I would like to take special note of the work he has done in this area, in bringing this health care and health issue to the attention of the American public, and also Ms. DELAURO, who has been here night after night helping raise the level of consciousness of what is really going on in this country and in this Congress.

As I sat in my office tonight, I heard you speak of what the Speaker had said about trying to get Medicare, "We will let it wither on the vine," and Mr. Dole bragging about how in 1965, he fought against Medicare. Then I was pleased to come down tonight to join you and Mr. KLINK. We sit on the Committee on Energy and Commerce and the Subcommittee on Health and the Environment, which has jurisdiction over Medicare and Medicaid. Again, Mr. DURBIN, who was here tonight, had many, many words to speak on this subject.

We were just talking about trust here a few minutes ago. Who do they trust to look after the health care needs of this Nation? Is it going to be the President or citizen Bob Dole?

As we take a look at it, I think more than just words we should look beyond the words. Let us look at some of the proposals that have been brought forth before the Committee on Commerce, the Subcommittee on Health and Environment which both of us sit on now.

Who do the children and the seniors of this country trust to provide for their needs? If we take a look at Medicaid, and we talked about Medicare, I guess is the most popular, but Medicaid and the drastic reductions proposed in Medicaid, Medicaid takes care of children, but also two-thirds of our seniors

rely on Medicaid for nursing home care.

But the so-called Medicaid reform proposal that was put forth in early June here before the Committee on Energy and Commerce, the Subcommittee on Health and Environment, Democrats insisted on a couple things. First of all, we insisted to ensure that there is a safety net for elderly, the disabled and for impoverished children. The Democrats also insisted that Medicaid be a joint Federal-State partnership which would work together to provide critical health care needs for those who really truly need it in this country.

What did the Republican bill do? It removed the guarantee of health care for the elderly and disabled and replaced it with the hope of Governors across this country. I have no problem with Governors. I think they do a good job. But what my Republican friends forgot and they did not add was, we give it to the Governors, the reason why we have a Medicaid Program in the first place is because the States could not and did not provide for those people who needed care.

So the GOP bill, while it allows the States to define the scope, the amount and duration of any Medicaid benefit, and in that bill it states the Governors need to provide a nursing home benefit, it would allow the States to limit that nursing home benefit to just 5 days. People do not go to the nursing home because they only need care for 5 days.

So they would have 5 days a year, that is what the bill said, 5 days every calendar year. The average care for a person in a nursing home is \$38,000. So we are going to help with 5 days' worth and after that they are on their own.

Where does that money go? For all the populations that this bill, the Republican bill, purported to protect, the elderly, disabled, children and low-income families, it did not even guarantee that they would receive quality care, let alone adequate care, when the nursing home benefit is defined as 5 days.

I received a letter from the Michigan Health and Hospital Association on this block grant, Medicaid block grant proposal. Here is what they said, and I quote:

We fear that under the Republican Medicaid block grant program, health care services for our most vulnerable population, the elderly living in nursing homes, the poor and children, may be jeopardized as hospitals who continue to bear a disproportionate share of the burden of caring for these individuals face reduced payments.

In other words, they are going to cut, for those who provide the care, even further.

Here is what else the Republican bill did. Currently, under current law, we have a prohibition against spousal and family impoverishment. That is current law. You cannot put a family into poverty while they are trying to provide for their parent in a nursing home. Unlike current law, the proposal does not prohibit States from charging high

copayments for Medicaid or contributions associated with long-term care.

Another troubling aspect of the proposal, and I asked the drafters of the bill when it came before the committee, I said this legislation does not require the benefits provided by the program to be provided equally across a State. I am from Michigan. I represent northern Michigan, a very rural area.

So, for instance, if Michigan chose to provide for long-term care in Grand Rapids, would they deny that same long-term care benefit to the folks in the upper peninsula of Michigan? The drafters of the bill said they could do that. So even in the State they are not even going to get equal treatment if it is left to this Republican bill on Medicaid.

Medicaid recipients and their families cannot afford substantial cuts in State spending and the Federal Government, and we cannot afford to shift it all from the Federal Government to the State because neither one can do it standing alone.

But I want to balance the budget. I know Mr. PALLONE wants to, and Mr. DOGGETT and Mr. DURBIN, but there is a right way and there is a wrong way to do it. So to try to fix things, Democrats offered a number of amendments on Medicaid. Let me just hit 12 of them, if I can, briefly.

Let us have an amendment in there would effectively prohibit fraud and abuse in Medicaid. That was rejected. That was Mr. DINGELL who brought up that amendment.

So we said, Ms. ESHOO from California brought up an amendment that said, let us have a guarantee of coverage for children, make sure the kids are taken care of under Medicaid. Rejected.

Well, then let us take care of the elderly who need nursing home care. That is what Medicare, that is what we spend two-thirds of the money for. Let us do that. That was your amendment and Mr. MARKEY from Massachusetts. That amendment was rejected.

We said, surely there has to be some compassion here. So let us provide coverage for the elderly who have Alzheimer's disease. That was Mr. DEUTSCH of Florida. He offered that amendment. Rejected.

So we said, surely we are going to take care of our veterans who need nursing home care. Remember that one? Mr. GORDON of Tennessee brought up that amendment. They will not even take care of veterans. That was rejected under the Medicaid bill.

So we said, all right, can we at least take care of the seniors who are in a nursing home now receiving Medicaid benefits. can we take care of that one? Mr. KLINK brought up that amendment. That was rejected.

Well, how about one of the Republicans, Mr. GANSKE. He is a doctor on the committee. He brought up, let us just guarantee current law to take care of the kids. That was rejected.

Well, Mr. RICHARDSON, he brought up the amendment that said, let us guarantee coverage for native Americans,

Indians. I have seven tribes in my district, great amendment. That was rejected by the majority party.

How about just allowing, this was Mr. ENGEL of New York and Mr. SHERROD BROWN of Ohio, how about just allowing the right of the elderly to choose their own nursing home. If you are going to go on Medicaid, you go to a nursing home, seniors, you get to choose which one you want to go to. Rejected.

How about Ms. FURSE of Oregon, who said, how about if we take care of pregnant women and infants, kids under 2. That was rejected 14 to 25.

We said, all right, how about current law, we provide for women with cancer, breast cancer and cervical cancer. Can we keep that coverage going under Medicaid. No, that was rejected, 17 to 23. We lost that one.

I said, hey, I am concerned about rural areas. We are treated different than urban areas. Pay us the same, whether you live in Escanaba, MI in the Upper Peninsula or in Grand Rapids, if you are in a nursing home you should get paid the same. That was rejected. That way my amendment.

How about just restoring the minimum payment standards for hospital and nursing homes and managed care plans, restore the current minimum funding for them. That your amendment, Mr. PALLONE. That was rejected 16 to 24.

So the point is, it is more than just words. We offered commonsense amendment for breast cancer, veterans, to let seniors choose their nursing homes, take care of children, infants, help them out, come together in a partnership, that is what this trust issue is all about. Every one of our proposals were rejected.

So more than just the words of citizen Bob Dole or more than just the words of Speaker NEWT GINGRICH, look at what their legislation really does. As we move into this election year, I do hope we have debates. And I hope they are not about just the words of what someone said but, rather, the legislation they are proposing, because I think when you look at the legislation that is proposed and what we as Democrats have tried to stand up for, that safety net for seniors, for veterans, for children, and see it being cut away, torn away by votes of 16 to 24, where we lose commonsense amendments, then I think the trust will be with the Democratic Party. The trust will be with more than just words but, rather, with what the legislation proposes.

Again, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey for his leadership on this issue. It is always a pleasure to work with you on the Energy and Commerce Committee, especially the Health and Environment Subcommittee, as we continue to bring common sense to this area.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman.

I am really pleased that the gentleman pointed out the relationship be-

tween Medicaid and Medicare, because I think many people think that Medicaid is a program that is primarily for the poor. Of course, it is. But the bottom line is that two-thirds of the money under Medicaid pays for nursing home care. It is very easy for someone who is middle class or someone who is fairly wealthy after a few months or a few years, in some cases, in a nursing home to find themselves on Medicaid. That is why so much of the Medicaid dollars in fact go for senior citizens.

It is interesting, I want to yield, but I just wanted to say that we started out the year, I think, certainly last year where the Republican leadership was trying to cut and change dramatically Medicare. I think as they realized politically that that was not working too well with the American people, they started to talk about it less and less. Now they do not want us to remind them about it.

Then they started going to Medicaid, because they figured, well, maybe we can cut that and we can change that and people will not worry about it so much because it only affects poor people. Then they realized that these senior citizens, in particular, who are impacted by changes in Medicaid, who objected to it, we brought it out. So now we do not hear much talk about changes in Medicaid anymore either.

I think we can be sure that if the Republican leadership were to continue into the next Congress and if we did not have President Clinton out there threatening to veto these changes in Medicare and Medicaid, we would see both the drastic changes in Medicare and Medicaid come up once again.

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Mr. STUPAK. I mean look, if the partnership that I spoke of is no longer there, that we are in Medicaid which pays for nursing home care, and it is \$38,000 a year, and you are only there for 5 days and they pull the rug out from underneath you, who pays for it? If the senior citizen cannot, it goes to the family. It is an indirect tax on the families of this country. You are not going to throw your parents out on the street for 360 days and get 5 days next year and then throw them out again. You are going to pick up that cost, that \$30,000 a year. Who is going to be able to afford that?

Mr. PALLONE. Exactly; thank you.

I yield to the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DOGGETT].

Mr. DOGGETT. I thank the gentleman, and, you know, as I have listened to your comments this evening and those of our other colleagues, I think there are several conclusions that can be drawn about this Medicare debate, and as important as Medicaid and Medicare are themselves, some of the most important programs ever set up in this Congress, I think the first conclusion is even more important than Medicare, and that is the conclusion that, as you listen to this debate, and you listen to the way the Repub-

lican leadership has run away from Medicare, it is because the American people are paying attention, and most of the people who are informed, who have followed this debate, understand what the Republican majority, the first time they got a majority in this Congress, the first thing they went after was Medicare and Medicaid. They set out to undermine and dismantle those systems, and the American people understand that.

All of the excuses and the subterfuges that have been brought up here, when you get right down to it, the American people all over this country who have followed this debate, they understand it, and they know that Speaker GINGRICH set out to cut Medicare and that he is still committed to that program.

And I think the second conclusion that is very apparent from this debate is there is no doubt what Speaker GINGRICH was talking about, and I know in the course of this special order you had the speech, almost his entire speech, given again for him by our colleague from Pennsylvania, but I want to emphasize that it is not only the words of that speech, but as some of our other colleagues pointed out, and I am quoting from a story in the New York Times 2 days after he gave the speech, he was at a town meeting down in his district near Atlanta, and the Atlanta Journal and Constitution reported that, quote, Gingrich said he was referring to the fee-for-service portion of Medicare which he believed that seniors would leave. That is what he said about "wither on the vine." And 2 days after that, the Los Angeles Times referred to his press secretary, Mr. Blankley, who said here in Washington that what he was referring to in saying he wanted it to wither on the vine, that Mr. Blankley said Mr. GINGRICH's comments were consistent with the Republican belief that seniors would voluntarily leave the traditional Medicare system.

Now, that is one of the few times Mr. Blankley has said anything that I, frankly, have agreed with. I agree with him completely that the Speaker's comment that he wanted Medicare to wither on the vine was consistent with the overall strategy. Indeed this was occurring at the same time that our Republican colleagues, as you may already have pointed out on Medicaid, came before the same committee that our colleagues from Michigan was talking about, and they said, "Let's just totally eliminate, terminate forever, any Federal health and safety standards for those who are in nursing homes."

Now, I think that is the kind of extremism that the American people reject. They realize that too often our nursing homes, though there are many fine ones, some of them have kind of gone along from crisis to crisis, and to say we will just totally abolish any kind of health and safety standard for those who are not able to protect themselves in nursing homes was part

of the same strategies that was going on at the same time. It was consistent with that.

But I would draw a third conclusion from your comments, and that would be a contrast between the Dole-Gingrich ticket with reference to Medicare because, you know, as coincidence would have it, or maybe it was not a coincidence, the same day that Speaker GINGRICH gave his speech, October 24, 1995, last fall when they were going gung ho, shut the Government down, we do not care how many billions of dollars it costs the taxpayers, close it down, which is what they did, and it came up to about a billion and a half dollars that were squandered of taxpayer money, but the very same day that Speaker GINGRICH made his comments Senator Dole was speaking the same day to a different group, and he said, and I quote, I was there fighting the fight, 1 of 12 voting against Medicare in 1965 because we knew it would not work.

It may not be expected in this election year for a Democrat to compliment a Republican, but I would tell my colleague from New Jersey that I do compliment Senator Dole, not on the substance of what he said about Medicare; indeed I could not disagree with him more on that, but at least, unlike the Speaker and the House Republicans, Senator Dole has not tried to run away from his comments. You do not see him going around and saying, "Well, when I was talking about voting against Medicare, I was only talking about the Health Care Financing Administration." He has stood by his statement. Indeed, he has taken pride in the fact that he has a record here. Just as Speaker GINGRICH and these Republican followers of him who wanted to let Medicare wither on the vine, Senator Dole has at least been willing to stand by his belief that Medicare was a mistake.

And I think that is where this debate should be. It should be about whether in the future of this country, and there is, no doubt, some need for some restructuring and some improvement and some strengthening of the Medicare and Medicaid system, but whether we will trust those who believe in the value of insuring all of our seniors and protecting them after all they have done for this country or whether we will turn it over to someone who said I was proud 30 years ago that I voted against Medicare at a time when well over half of the seniors had no health insurance program at all, whether you are going to turn it over to someone like that as well as someone who says, well, let us just let Medicare wither on the vine, instead of standing by their statements, as has so often happened here in the House on a variety of subjects.

Our Republican colleagues here in the House have, when caught and when the American people have realized what has occurred here, they have reacted by having their lawyers attempt

to intimidate those who would spread the word. They would like to distract the American people and wait until after November to continue with letting Medicare wither on the vine and to intimidate anyone who would remind the American people, as our colleague from Pennsylvania pointed out, who would dare to put on television the Speaker saying this in his own words, who would dare to repeat those words to Americans who might not have heard the speech, to Americans who may, in their struggle to make ends meet, have forgotten what an outrageous comment and what an outrageous plan this was.

And I know that the gentleman from New Jersey will remember that when we were trying to get the details to find out how much they were going to hike the premiums, how much they were going to hike the deductibles, how much they were going to hike the copayments, all things that were in the secret plan originally, that the first plan that was laid out in public was not a plan about how Medicare could be restructured. It was a public relations plan. It was the one the gentleman will recall that talked about kind of the herd mentality among our seniors and that they could be led around by their nose basically and that they would not realize what was being done to them in this instance.

History in the recent months has certainly demonstrated that that public relations adviser, I think he is the same fellow involved in this so-called Contract on America, was all off because the American people are more intelligent than that. They realized what was happening here, and as I have discussed with some of our folks down there in Texas, you know if you have got a gardener that says, "Let it wither, let your plants wither on the vine," most people have the good sense to realize that what you need is a new gardener because that is not the kind of gardener you want tending to your plants, and it is certainly not the kind of gardener that you want tending to something that is important and is vital to people as Medicare.

And to all of those who say that this campaign with reference to Medicare and making American people aware of it is too hard hitting, I would just submit that they need to consider how hard hitting this plan was on seniors, on individuals with disabilities. If this plan, as originally envisioned, has gone into effect, the consequences would have been dramatic, and if this election passes and there are not more people here willing to stand up and fight against these Medicare cuts, there is no doubt they will be back with the same secret plans that they had in the past.

Mr. PALLONE. I would just add to the gentleman: You know, I think that that is what elections should be all about: issues. That is what we are talking about here. I would like to see less emphasis on personality, which is what

so many campaigns are about, and just talk about issues. That is what we are talking about here, Medicare. It is an issue, and to the extent that there are ads running that point out where one side stands or the other on an issue as important as Medicare to the American people, that is what this should be all about, a public debate on the issues, and that is what the Democrats have been doing essentially for the last 18 months, trying to point out what the Republican leadership has been proposing on Medicare.

And I really think, as you said, Mr. DOGGETT, that most of my constituents are aware of it. Over the weekend I had a lot of people, I can just think of one woman in particular who came up to me when I was at church on Sunday and said, "You know, I don't want to lose my doctor." She was not even concerned about the level of funding. She just did not like the idea that she was going to be pushed into managed care, which is essentially what this Republican plan would propose to do.

So, I want to thank the gentleman for joining us tonight. We had a lot of participants here tonight, but we are not going to let this die, because I think we all realize that if this Republican leadership were allowed to have its way, we would see drastic changes in Medicare and cuts that ultimately would have it wither on the vine and cases to exist as a program that benefits seniors and provides for quality care and the level of services that they now have. So I want to thank the gentleman.

GETTING OUR FINANCIAL HOUSE IN ORDER

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DICKEY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege to be here tonight to address this Chamber and to have you be the acting Speaker, and I thank you for your willingness to take the time to do this.

I was particularly motivated to come tonight because I listened to the presentation of my colleagues and I would like to give you the other side of the story.

I would also like to say without any hesitation that I believe when you tell the American people the truth, they will have you do the right thing, and I feel very strongly that what this new Republican majority tried to do last year and what we are trying to do this year will make our children better off than we, this generation, find ourselves, and that if we fail, I think they will be worse off. I believe that with all my heart and soul.

I believe that what we tried to do last year was to get our financial house in order and balance the Federal budget. I believe we tried to save our trust