

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to devote my 5 minutes to the issue of Medicare, but I could not help but just briefly comment on the previous speaker whom I greatly admire. When I was home in my district in New Jersey this weekend, I was at a church service on Sunday. As I was coming out, a couple of people commented to me, one on Medicare which I will go into soon, but the other said something about the President. He said, "You know, one thing I admire about the President is the fact that we are at peace. We are at peace throughout the world." I think that kind of says it all. I frankly think that President Clinton's foreign policy has been a major success. In fact, he has kept us out of many wars around the world and has brought peace to many parts of the world that were not at peace before. I think that says a lot about his foreign policy and its success.

I just wanted to also comment on one of my previous colleague's statements, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. WELLER], when he berated the fact that President Clinton had vetoed the Republican Medicare legislation. All I can say is thank God that President Clinton was there and did veto that legislation. The Democrats basically in this Congress have prevented the Republican leadership from devastating Medicare. The Republican leadership has proposed major cuts in Medicare that would primarily pay for tax cuts for wealthy individuals and they have tried to change a program substantively so that essentially what would happen is that Medicare would disappear as we know it. Democrats prevented the Republican leadership last year from doubling Medicare Part B premiums and from any attempts to eliminate doctor choice which is very important to the average senior citizen. They prevented cutting Medicare premium assistance for low-income seniors, something that I actually tried to accomplish in the Committee on Commerce. A lot of people forget that the Republican leadership wanted to eliminate the current program where for low-income seniors Medicaid pays for Medicare part B premiums. We also stopped the Republicans from repealing Federal nursing home quality standards. Medicaid is a very important part of the overall program to provide quality health care for senior citizens as well. The Republican leadership tried to eliminate and gut Medicaid as well. They wanted to repeal Federal nursing home quality standards, they wanted to put homes and family farms of elderly couples at risk for nursing home care, and they wanted to force adult children to be financially responsible for their parents nursing home bills because two-thirds of Medicaid goes to pay for senior citizens who are in nursing homes. If that aid is eliminated or cut back significantly, we were going to see elderly relatives or also children having to pay for their parents or their grandparents in nursing homes.

All of this I am mentioning today because now we see the Republicans trying to basically rewrite history and say that they were not trying to devastate and eliminate Medicare. Most significantly we have gotten some criticism on our side of the aisle because we constantly quote a statement by Speaker GINGRICH. I just want to read that statement again. Speaker GINGRICH said, and this was last year on October 26:

We don't get rid of it in round one because we don't think that that's politically smart and we don't think that's the right way to go through a transition period. But we believe it's going to wither on the vine because we think people are voluntarily going to leave it.

As many of my colleagues know, the AFL-CIO, the labor international organization, has been putting on ads where they have actual pictures, video, if you will, of Speaker GINGRICH making this quote about Medicare. Now the Republicans are trying to take it off the air because they are afraid of the truth.

Let me tell my colleagues, what could be more appropriate, what is more significant than the kind of cuts and the kind of changes in Medicare that the Republicans were trying to achieve? If those had been accomplished, if President Clinton and the Democrats had not stopped those major changes in Medicare, then indeed Medicare would have withered on the vine which is exactly what Speaker GINGRICH says that he wants to do.

For those who think that the Republicans have changed, they have not changed. In this session of Congress, I should say in this year, they have already proposed another budget that makes significant cuts and changes in Medicare. Their current plan, a little different maybe than last year, but still tries to do the same thing: It would eliminate doctor and hospital choice by forcing seniors into Medicare managed care plans, it would allow doctors to charge extra out-of-pocket costs to seniors who remain in Medicare fee-for-service, it would severely cut Medicare and Medicaid hospital funding, forcing many hospitals to close their doors on seniors, it would eliminate coverage guarantee for over 4 million elderly Americans who need nursing home care, that is the Medicaid aspect again, and would further erode Medicare solvency by creating wealthy healthy plans leaving many seniors with higher costs and less care.

What the Republicans are doing once again is cutting the amount of money that is available for Medicare which ultimately will translate into less quality care and less services for senior citizens.

TWA FLIGHT 800

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. STEARNS] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to say parenthetically that the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] knows that that quote is out of context. In fact most of the television stations across this country are not longer running their (Democrats) ads because they know it is not the truth. The Speaker was talking about the Health Care Financing Administration, not Medicare. He was talking about trying to downsize it. Who else, Mr. Speaker, said we should scrap the Health Care Financing Administration? President Clinton and Vice President Gore in their Putting People First book. They outline exactly the same thing that they are accusing the Speaker when he talked about getting rid of the bureaucracy here in Washington with the Health Care Financing Administration. I think we need to establish the truth.

Mr. Speaker, I want to share my thoughts today about the crash of TWA Flight 800. But before I do so, I wish to say to the family and friends and loved ones of the passengers and the crew who were aboard that ill-fated flight that our prayers here in the House, in the Senate and Congress are with all of you at this very difficult time.

The tragic ending of over 230 passengers on this flight is a grim reminder of another flight, Mr. Speaker, Pan Am 103, which went down over Lockerbie, Scotland. It has yet to be established whether sabotage played a role in the crash of this flight.

Unfortunately, an overwhelmingly difficult and grim task has been made even more difficult by the inclement weather. However, when additional fuselage has been retrieved from the ocean, the antiterrorist experts that have been called in to investigate will be in a better position to render a judgment.

□ 0930

Chemical residue has been detected by the EGIS machine which was developed in the mid-1980's, which is specifically designed to detect plastic explosives. In time, we will know the cause of this disaster and if it is, as suspected, an act of terrorism, I pray to the Almighty God above that the perpetrators are caught and dealt with and the punishment will fit the crime.

Even if we find it was not an act of sabotage, the time has come for this country to treat acts of terrorism for what they are: An assault on Pan Am Flight 103 was a direct attack on this country. Mr. Speaker, Government must treat American aviation security as a national defense issue and not as a regulatory issue.

That is why I am here and I am talking about drafting a bill, a piece of legislation to do just that. One cannot help but hearken back to the tragedy at Lockerbie.

After officials, in channeling of the investigation of the Pan Am flight, determined that the plane was carrying plastic explosives which blew the plane

out of the sky, Congress held hearings and passed legislation, the Aviation Security Act of 1990.

Section 108 of the public law was entitled "Deployment of Explosive Detection Equipment." Certain guidelines were put in place for the deployment of high-technology equipment which could detect plastic explosives such as used in Pan Am 103.

Mr. Speaker, on July 20, 1996, The Washington Post ran a story with the following headline: "U.S. Airports Lack High-Tech Scan Devices To Detect Explosives." This article details how the Federal Aviation Administration developed several high-technology pieces of equipment to detect plastic explosives.

Currently, the Europeans have about 90 such machines in use. Germany has approximately 50 machines like this in use, the rest being in the United Kingdom and France. That is all well and good. I think they are right to want to protect their citizens.

Do my colleagues know how many of these machines are used in the United States? None. We are now testing about four of these machines in San Francisco and Atlanta because of the large volume of visitors passing through these airports, but we have only four of these type machines in use in a testing mode in the United States.

Something is definitely wrong with this situation. We developed this high-technology equipment at taxpayers' expense here in the United States. Then we sell it overseas and we do not even use it here at home. I believe legislation to rectify this problem is long overdue because, as much as I wish I were wrong, I believe such barbarous and cowardly acts of violence will continue to be committed against the United States as well as other countries.

Machines such as the EGIS and the updated CTX-5000 that works like a CAT scan, slicing up objects visually, ensure that we will find all such bombs and plastic devices on board. We are now using 20-year-old x-ray machines that can only detect 10 percent of this. I hope all my colleagues will join me in sponsoring my legislation to protect all Americans.

MEDICARE SHOULD NOT WITHER ON THE VINE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. DOGGETT] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. DOGGETT. Mr. Speaker, while I share the concerns of the last speaker about terrorism, I am amazed by his comments defending Speaker GINGRICH and his comments about Medicare and his challenge to my good friend, our colleague, the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. PALLONE.

I wonder if the gentleman has ever listened to Speaker GINGRICH's exact words, because they could not be clear-

er in what he said, nor in how he interpreted these words himself and his press secretary interpreted these words. Furthermore, the Speaker's determination to let Medicare wither on the vine is consistent with everything he and his Republican colleagues were doing throughout this period of time.

Let me refer to his precise words. They were said on October 24, 1995. We have got a chart here with those words on it. He said, the key words, "But we believe it's going to wither on the vine because we think people are voluntarily going to leave it."

So the big debate and the attempt at intimidation of people all over in this country who would have the audacity to hold the Speaker to these words is, well, it referred to some government bureaucracy. Well, he was not talking about downsizing a Federal agency. People were not going to leave a Federal agency. They were going to leave Medicare.

But one need not take my interpretation of it today, because only 2 days later, after Speaker GINGRICH demonstrated what his gardening ability would be for the seniors of America and for generations who would rely on Medicare, he commented on it himself. The Atlanta Constitution and Journal reported on October 29 of last year that, quote, "Gingrich said he was referring to the fee-for-service portion of Medicare, which he believes seniors would leave." Fee-for-service Medicare, the Medicare system that President Johnson signed into law in 1965.

As if that verification from the Speaker himself as to what he meant when he said let Medicare wither on the vine were not enough, his press secretary, Mr. Tony Blankley and some of the only words Mr. Blankley has ever said that I found reason to agree with, told the Los Angeles Times, quote, that "it," the statement that he referred to, referred to fee-for-service Medicare. Blankley said that GINGRICH's comments were consistent with Republicans' anticipated belief that most seniors will voluntarily choose to leave this traditional form of Medicare.

Indeed, Mr. Blankley is right. The Speaker's position, which he is so desperate to run away from, as are all of his followers who here in this Republican Congress thought merely following the Speaker 90 percent of the time to cut Medicare was a sign of disloyalty, you ought to be there with him every time you get an opportunity to cut Medicare, those folks want to reinterpret his remarks this year. They want to tell television stations they will be intimidated by a crew of the biggest thick carpet lawyers that they can find to sue them if they run the Speaker's own words with him saying let Medicare wither on the vine.

This crowd of people were the same ones who cheered last year when the No. 2 Republican, DICK ARMEY of my own State of Texas, was saying that he though Medicare was an imposition on his freedom, to use his words. He said

he would have never voted for Medicare in the first place and would like to see its demise. He also was demonstrating his gardening ability and the desire that Medicare wither on the vine.

But it was the very same day that Speaker GINGRICH gave this speech, October 24, 1995, that Bob Dole, the other half of the Dole-Gingrich ticket that we have this year, Bob Dole was telling a group on that same day at another part of our country that he was proud, to use his words, proud to have been 1 of 12 people who stood up and voted against Medicare because he did not think it would work in 1965.

Yes; some three decades ago and a year, Bob Dole was here in the Congress voting against Medicare because he did not think it would work. I would have to say to his credit, at least he is not trying to run away from his comments the way these Republicans are determined to run away from the comment that they want Medicare to wither on the vine, as the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] commented a few minutes ago.

The are scared to death that the American people are going to understand their determination to destroy the Medicare system as soon as they can pick up a few more votes in this election cycle. Meanwhile, let us distract the American people and everything else, but come 1997, let it wither on the vine.

INTRODUCING THE WHITE HOUSE INSPECTOR GENERAL ACT OF 1996

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from New Hampshire [Mr. BASS] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. BASS. Mr. Speaker, I am here to talk about a bill I am going to introduce establishing an inspector general for the White House, but I cannot help beginning by making a comment concerning the remarks of my friend from Texas a second ago.

As they say in poker, the cards speak, and the fact is that those television stations would not have removed those ads from the air if they had said what the real record shows. What NEWT GINGRICH said at that point was, and I quote,

Okay, what do you think the Health Care Financing Administration is? That's HCFA. It is a centralized government bureaucracy, it is everything we are telling Boris Yeltsin to get rid of. No, we do not get rid of it in round one because we do not think that is politically smart, but we do it through a transition. We believe it is going to wither on the vine.

Now what does that mean? That means that the choice here is whether we protect, improve, and preserve Medicare or whether we protect a Federal bureaucracy. That is the issue before us today, and we plan to move forward.

Mr. Speaker, today I am introducing the White House Inspector General Act of 1996, to establish an Office of Inspector General in the Executive Office of