

abuse, would in fact be eligible for a 10 year jail term and lose their rights as providers.

Further items in this reform legislation would include reducing our paperwork cost. Twelve percent of Medicare now goes to paperwork. We can reduce that with electronic billing to just 2 percent.

Further, on medical education, very important medical education for our interns and residents at teaching hospitals, it is a program that should be supported. Maybe it should not be part of the Medicare Program, but it should be part of the Federal Government's allotment of funds, so teaching hospitals continue to have the finest education and doctors turned out of medical schools so we can make sure that we have the education we need, but not as part of Medicare. Medicare should be for our senior citizens' health care.

□ 1815

Another provision of the bill is for the Medicare lockbox. Any savings we get from fraud, waste and abuse would in fact go to health care for our seniors.

Finally, the legislation proposed would make sure that we in fact have options. We would retain the fee-for-service choice of doctor and choice of hospital for every senior across the country, but also give them the option of having managed care Medicare to include eyeglasses and pharmaceuticals for the healthiest of seniors, and also medical savings accounts under Medicare which would give them the chance to invest the money they want to their health care and have the extra dollars they keep be rolled over to the following year when they might need the funds more.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important that we as Republicans and Democrats work together to save Medicare for our seniors, for this generation of seniors and the next, to make sure that health care is there and Medicare is there and we do so in the proper way for the protection of all our senior citizens.

MEDICARE SCARE

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

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, I come to the well tonight fresh off of 30 days of recess that included a week of vacation with my children and about 3 or so weeks with my constituents. And it is with a great deal of sorrow and disappointment, Mr. Speaker, that I have to report to you that there is a dark occurrence happening in many parts of America right now where a fraud is being perpetrated on people who are vulnerable, people who are sometimes more gullible than maybe many in the population, and people who can be preyed upon by appealing to real anxiety that turns into the exploitation of

fear when, instead of being truthful, what is happening is that those individuals are being pushed into believing something that is simply not the case.

Mr. Speaker, what I am speaking about, what I am talking about is a very, very expensive, well thought out, well produced, calculated demagogic ad campaign that is designed to persuade senior citizens in our country that this Congress is trying to not only cut but gut Medicare and destroy the safety net, the health care safety net for senior citizens. It is an ad campaign that is not only well done, well thought out and well produced and absolutely blatantly demagogically false, but it is also being paid for in a way that those who are being forced to pay for it do not even approve and do not want it to exist.

I am talking about the fine working men and women of local AFL-CIO affiliates, several of which I have been personally endorsed by. I am talking about the use of funds that are being mandatorily taken out of paychecks to fund politically motivated ad campaigns that distort and completely falsify the facts.

The facts are, as Mr. FOX was speaking earlier, quite simple. That is that Medicare is going broke. Medicare is going broke. Medicare is going broke. How do we know that? We know that because the Medicare trustees have said it. Who are the Medicare trustees? Three of them are members of the President's own cabinet. Another is a political appointee, and two are individual citizens. And they say Medicare is going broke.

What is the responsible response? What is the right response? What would be the correct response that you, Mr. Speaker, or the citizens of this country would want to see from its legislators?

It seems to me that the responsible way to deal with that is to look at the problem, face it clearly and do what is right to fix it. That is exactly what we have done. In fact, not only has this Congress done that, but with a different set of policy statements the President has done the same thing.

It boils down to slowing the rate of growth. It is pretty simple. Instead of growing at 10 percent a year, it has to grow at about 6.5 or 7 percent a year. Yet this is being used for political purposes to frighten senior citizens into believing that this Congress is trying to destroy Medicare.

Mr. Speaker, the one thing that this Republic cannot tolerate, the one thing that this Republic cannot stand is blatant exploitative, manipulative lying in the political process. That is what is happening by this ad campaign financed by the AFL-CIO.

It is wrong. It is not voter education. It is voter disinformation. It should stop. I just hope and trust that the citizens will not be swayed nor fooled by it.

ENGLISH THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

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

Mr. ROTH. Mr. Speaker, on August 1 this Congress finally began to show as much sense, common sense, as the American people by overwhelmingly passing our bill to make English the official language of the United States. Make no mistake about this, this was an historic accomplishment. For the first time in over two decades, Congress has taken a concrete step toward cementing our national unit by reinforcing our most important common bond, the English language. After 25 years of Great Society social experimentation, we are finally starting to reverse the tide.

That historic vote was cast on the 1st of August, the first step toward returning to a commonsense policy of promoting American unity by promoting the teaching and learning of English. But the battle has just begun. There is still so much left to be done, starting with the Senate.

Acting on the bill that we passed here in the House, we now ask the Senate to pass this legislation and send it onto the President for his signature. Frankly, I know that President Clinton will sign this bill. The overwhelming majority of the American people support making English our official language. I do not believe that the President wants to alienate a large segment of the electorate just 60 days before the election.

When push comes to shove, Bill Clinton will sign that bill. And as he did when he was Governor of Arkansas, the President should sign this bill, not only because it has certain political advantage that it confers on him. He should sign it because this is the most important piece of legislation this Congress and his administration will consider.

Mr. Speaker, we have witnessed events recently that have testified to the fragility of nations: the sundering of the Soviet Union, the breakup of Yugoslavia, the near divorce between Quebec and the rest of Canada. Secessionist tides are rising all across Eastern and even Western Europe. All these incidents share a common thread. The thread, incidentally and ironically enough, is the unraveling of national unity across the world today. The twin forces of nationalism and tribalism are plunging nations into a separatism spiral, and the United States is not immune.

America is the most diverse Nation in the history of the world. We are a people from every corner of the globe. We represent every culture, every language, every religion, every difference imaginable. The last census, for example, indicated that over 320 languages are spoken in our schools, cities, and communities. Do not think for a second that this Nation can avoid the fate

that has been fallen other multicultural, multi-ethnic nations. If we have averted their fate so far, it is no small thanks to our common language, our common glue, our commonality, the English language.

As Winston Churchill said, the common language is a nation's most priceless inheritance, and when we pass on, this Nation, our traditions and our values, on to those people who are following us, passing on a common language is our Nation's most priceless inheritance that we can pass on. At the dawn of the 21st century, Churchill's observation, as usual, could not be more true. A common language is now more important than perhaps ever before.

My friends, we cannot stand idly by and hope that the global forces of separatism will pass us by. That is like closing our eyes and praying that a hurricane will suddenly veer off and project a different path and spare our town. We need to steel our national resolve to the storm and solidify the ties that bind us together as a nation.

I know the majority of the people in this body have demonstrated on August 1 that they truly believe that English as our official language is the right course. I ask Members to join me once again in a continuation of that struggle and urge the Senate to take up this bill and finish the job. It is true we stop depending on divine intervention to spare our Nation from separatist forces. We have an obligation as leaders to the American people and to our posterity. Let us send a clear message and signal to our colleagues in the Senate to make English our official language.

CITIZEN CONCERNS

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 majority leader.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I wanted to take the floor tonight and address my colleagues over the fact that over the past month, essentially since we adjourned on August 2 for the 3- or 4-week district work period, I had the opportunity to have a number of forums, both general forums with my constituents or specific forums or town meetings on the senior issues, on environmental issues, and also on education issues. What I heard over and over again from my constituents was that they were very upset and they were very much opposed to the Republican leadership agenda that we have seen in the Congress over this last session now almost 2 years.

What my constituents were telling me over and over again was that they did not want to cut Medicare. They did not want to see massive cuts in higher education programs, and they certainly did not want to turn the clock back on the last 25 years of environmental pro-

tection that has been implemented by this Congress and by presidents on a bipartisan basis.

My constituents could not have been any louder or any clearer on this issue. They felt very strongly that the Republican leadership, in this case Speaker GINGRICH and the rest of the Republican leadership, have the wrong priorities, that when it comes to balancing the budget and when it comes to the priorities that have to be implemented in order to balance that budget, that Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment were not the areas where cuts should be made.

Essentially what I was getting was the impression that the Gingrich Congress, if you will, is out of touch with the American people and their concerns. I just wanted to review, because I think many times now we are getting very close to the election and a lot of times the public hears things that are very different from the actions that have been taken in this Congress by the Republican leadership in the last 2 years.

I just want to remind my colleagues about some of the initiatives that we have seen in this 104th Congress. We have seen an unprecedented Republican record of voting for extreme cuts in Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment essentially to finance tax breaks for the wealthy.

Since the Speaker NEWT GINGRICH, first pounded the gavel in January 1995, Medicare has essentially been under siege in this Congress. The Gingrich Congress again and again has tried to destroy Medicare, threatening to inflict major hardships on millions of senior citizens and their families. Also this has been the biggest anti-education Congress in history.

□ 1830

The Gingrich Congress has continually gone after education funding as a piggy bank, again for their tax breaks for the wealthy, targeting student loans in particular. What I was hearing from my constituents at the various forums that I had was that right now the cost of higher education is prohibitive, and whether you are going to a public school, public university or a private college or university, the costs continue to skyrocket. The only way that most Americans, that the average middle class American, can afford a college education today is if they have some combination of scholarship or grant or student loan or work-study program, and yet what we have seen here is the Republican leadership constantly go after those very student loan programs or those very Federal grant programs or even the work-study programs that make it possible for many people, most people, if you will right now, to go and to continue with their higher education.

And essentially, if the Gingrich Congress gets its way, students and their parents would pay thousands of dollars more for a college education at a time

when tuition is already spiraling out of reach for many working families. So either they are going to pay more or they are not going to be able to afford to go to college or to graduate school, and they simply forgo that because they will not be able to get the help that is now afforded by the Federal Government.

On the environment, basically the Gingrich Congress rolled into town in January 1995 determined to roll back major environmental protections in order to pay back the special interest polluters who finance their campaigns. What we saw was that from the very beginning the polluters were sitting down with the Republican leadership at the table and writing, or rewriting if you will, environmental laws.

I do not think that is in the best interests of America's families. Obviously, people feel very strongly that they should be able to breathe clean air, drink clean water and eat safe food, and rolling back the environmental protections, which we have seen put in place on a bipartisan basis by Congress for the last 25 years since Earth Day, is clearly not the way that my constituents, and I think that most Americans, feel that we should be going.

Let me just give you an example. You know one of the things that we keep hearing is that this Congress has changed, that somehow the Republican leadership now understands that they cannot roll back environmental protection, and they are starting to do a few things here and there that maybe show that. But you know if you look at the budget that was adopted earlier this year, in the spring of 1996, you see that it still contains all these poison pills from the old budget, extreme proposals that go against America's values. It still eliminates the Medicaid guarantee of meaningful health benefits for millions of Americans, it still threatens Medicare with excessive cuts and damaging policies, it still cuts education, and it still takes the environmental cop off the beat. What I mean by that is it cuts enforcement, and I have said over and over again here in the well that it is very nice if you have good environmental laws on the books, but if you do not have the money to enforce those laws, to send out the investigators, to have the environmental cop on the beat so to speak, you might as well not have the laws on the books at all.

And this is what we are seeing, a budget that basically disregards America's values.

I wanted to go into some of the points on this budget, but I see that the gentlewoman from Connecticut, who has been so much a leader on making some of these points, has joined me, and if she would like to have some time yielded at this point?

Ms. DELAURO. Yes, I appreciate my colleague yielding. I just wanted to make two or three points.

I think we have seen that Labor Day has come and gone, the August congressional work break is over, and as