

other State, ready and willing to contribute in any way possible to the establishment of justice and freedom. Because we are proud to enjoy the freedoms that our Nation stands for, we have been willing to accept the responsibilities and sacrifices that are demanded. The discharge of this important trust is what patriotism is all about.

Inherent in this quest for freedom is the belief in equality. Only as equals can we join in the common quest.

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Our Nation's first elected leader, President George Washington, said it best when he wrote that "the spirit of freedom beats too high in us to submit to slavery."

President Washington's message to the Senate and the House of Representatives of January 8, 1790, underscored this guiding belief in equality. He said, and I quote, "The welfare of our country is the object to which our cares and efforts are to be directed. And I shall derive great satisfaction from a cooperation with you, in the pleasing though arduous task of ensuring to our fellow citizens the blessings which they have a right to expect from a free, efficient and equal government."

What is difficult to understand is how, despite our Nation's adoption of equality as one of the guiding principles of our democracy, we, the American citizens who reside in the territory of Puerto Rico, are not only denied the right to participate as equals in the democratic process but also denied participation in the safety net programs that all other Americans enjoy in the 50 States. Despite our common vision throughout the century, despite the 197,000 Americans from Puerto Rico who have heard the call to defend democracy, and despite the thousands who willingly paid the price of patriotism and sacrificed their own lives, 4 million American citizens are denied the benefits that all others in the Nation take for granted.

Senator MOYNIHAN told us a decade ago that when people fight for a country, they get a claim on that country. His words ring as true today as they were then. We have been equals during times of war and death, and we aspire to be equals in time of peace, prosperity and in life.

Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage my colleagues to remember at this critical time that separate and unequal policies that promote unfairness and discrimination have no place in our Nation. By virtue of living in a territory, American citizens are denied equality that is inherent in the American system of government. This denial betrays our democracy and the men and women who valiantly defend it.

What is more, let us remember that even though our troops face danger equally, they are not all equal citizens because not all of them enjoy the same participation in the health and education programs that benefit all other Americans.

Puerto Ricans are first-class citizens in times of war, but second-class citizens in times of peace. That is un-American.

THE SOLVENCY OF SOCIAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MICA). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I come before the Chamber this morning to talk about an important item for this country, and that is the solvency of Social Security.

I have been in Congress 6 years. When I first came to Congress in the 103rd Congress, and subsequently in the 104th Congress, 105th Congress, I have introduced legislation that would keep Social Security solvent.

This year, I am chairman of a bipartisan Budget Committee Task Force on Social Security. The problem of solvency justifies a few minutes of review and comment.

Most workers today look forward to some kind of Social Security when we retire based on the fact that most of us now pay 12.4 percent out of every dollar we earn as a Social Security tax. Most workers anticipate that there is going to be some return on that kind of contribution to the Social Security system.

However, we were told back in 1993 by the Congressional Budget Office, and by the President's Office of Management and Budget, that Social Security would be going broke.

Now, in the last several months, we have been hearing from both sides of the aisle, the Democrats and the Republicans, that paying down the public debt with some of the Social Security surplus would somehow save Social Security. Not so. Not so, Mr. Speaker.

It is good and it is historic that for the first time in recent history we will not be using the Social Security surplus for other government spending programs. So when some have bragged about having a balanced budget in the past, they have been misleading. It has been somewhat of a hoodwinking of the American public, because we have depended all these years on the surplus coming in from Social Security to mask the deficit.

The good news is that this year, for the first time in many, many years, we will not be spending that Social Security trust fund surplus. Now we have got to have the intestinal fortitude, we have got to have the willingness, to face the tough problem of saving Social Security and Medicare. That means a restructuring of the program.

Generally, Mr. Speaker, the problem is based on demographics. There are more and more retirees in relation to the number of workers paying in those taxes. Let me just give you a quick example of why depending on current

worker taxes to pay current retiree benefits is a problem.

In 1950, there were 17 people working, paying in their Social Security taxes that was immediately sent out to beneficiaries. 17 to 1. This year there are three workers paying in their Social Security tax for every one retiree, and the estimate is that by 2030 there will be only two workers trying to come up with enough to support their families and one retiree. So there has to be some structural changes in the way the Social Security system works.

It is a tough decision, and that is why politicians have not dealt with it. There are only two ways to save Social Security. That is, either reduce benefits or increase the amount of revenue coming in. One way to increase revenue is private investment. However, that by itself will not fix Social Security.

Let us hope, Mr. Speaker, that we have the gumption, the fortitude, the willingness to step up to the plate to make the hard decisions in order to save Social Security. Let us hope that the American people are willing to learn about the complicated ways Social Security is financed and to encourage their representatives in Congress to move ahead. Let us be clear that even though using the Social Security surplus to pay down the public debt is better public policy than using the money to finance more government spending, it does not save Social Security.

LET US KEEP MEDICARE A SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC PROGRAM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, we received good news 2 weeks ago when the Medicare and Social Security trustees reported that both programs will be solvent significantly longer than projected. For Medicare, the trustees reported that the Medicare trust fund will remain solvent through at least 2015.

Those in Congress, the think tanks and the Washington pundits who want to privatize Medicare are wringing their hands over the trustees' latest report. They believe these new projections will lead Congress to do nothing towards reforming Social Security and Medicare.

Once again, Medicare privatizers are wrong. The real threat to Medicare is not its alleged pending bankruptcy. The real threat to Medicare is a legislative proposal just rejected by the National Bipartisan Commission on the Future of Medicare which would have privatized Medicare and delivered it to the private insurance market.

Under a proposal soon to be introduced called "premium support," Medicare would no longer pay directly for health care services. Instead, it would provide each senior with a voucher

good for part of the premium for private coverage. Medicare beneficiaries could use this voucher to buy into the fee-for-service plan sponsored by the Federal Government or to join a private plan.

To encourage consumer price sensitivity, the voucher would track to the lowest cost private plan; Medicare privatizers tell us that seniors could then shop for the plan that best suits their needs, paying the balance of the premium and extra if they want higher quality care. The proposal would create a new, private system of health coverage but it would abandon Medicare's fundamental principle of egalitarianism.

Today, the Medicare program is income-blind. All seniors have access to the same level of care. The idea that vouchers would empower seniors to choose a health plan that best suits their needs is simply, Mr. Speaker, a myth. The reality is that seniors will be forced to accept whatever plan they can afford.

The goal of the Medicare Commission was to ensure the program's long-term solvency. This proposal will not do that. Supporters of the voucher plan say it would shave 1 percent per year from the Medicare budget over the next few decades. That is still not enough to prevent insolvency, and it is based frankly on overly optimistic projections of private sector performance. Bruce Vladeck, a former administrator of the Medicare program and a commission member, doubted the commission plan would save the government even a dime.

Efforts to privatize Medicare are, of course, nothing new. Medicare beneficiaries have long been able to enroll in private managed care plans. Their experience, however, does not bode well for a full-fledged privatization effort. These managed care plans are already calling for higher government payments. They are dropping out of unprofitable markets and they are cutting back on benefits to America's elderly.

Managed care plans are profit driven and they do not tough it out when those profits are unrealized. We learned this lesson the hard way last year when 96 Medicare HMOs deserted more than 400,000 Medicare beneficiaries, including in Lorain and Trumbull Counties, Ohio, because the HMOs did not meet their profit objectives.

Before the Medicare program was launched in 1965, more than half the Nation's seniors were uninsured. Private insurance was the only option for the elderly, but insurers did not want seniors to join their plans because they knew that seniors would actually use most of their coverage. The private insurance market has changed considerably since then, but it still avoids high risk enrollees and, whenever possible, dodges the bill for high-cost medical services.

The problem is not necessarily malice or greed. It is the expectation that

private insurers can serve two masters, the bottom line and the common good. Logically, always looking to the bottom line, our system of private insurance has left 43 million uninsured individuals in the United States. If the private insurance industry cannot figure out how to cover these people, most of whom are middle-income workers and children, how will they treat high-risk, high-cost seniors?

If we privatize Medicare, we are telling America that not all seniors deserve the same level of quality health care. We are betting on a private insurance system that puts its own interests ahead of health care quality and a balanced Federal budget.

The Medicare Commission wisely disbanded without delivering a final product. Premium support proponents must realize that they cannot make Medicare privatization look like an equitable, fair alternative to the public program upon which 36 million seniors in this country depend. Premium support backers also have repeatedly tried to scare America's seniors by predicting that Medicare will go bankrupt.

Congress would not let Medicare go bankrupt any more than it would let the Department of Defense run out of money.

The goal is simple. Let us keep Medicare the successful public program it has always been.

TROOPS TO TEACHERS PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 1999

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. HEFLEY) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. HEFLEY. Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the Troops to Teachers Program Improvement Act of 1999. This legislation will enable retiring military personnel to find rewarding second careers as teachers in our Nation's public schools.

As we all know, our schools and students are in desperate need of more high-quality teachers. This bill, which I am introducing with the support of my colleagues, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. EDWARDS), the gentleman from California (Mr. GALLEGLY) and the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. HILL), will help provide those teachers. This bill not only reauthorizes Troops to Teachers, but also strengthens and improves the enormously successful program.

Troops to Teachers was created in 1994 to assist military personnel who were affected by military downsizing find second careers in which they could utilize their knowledge, professional skills and expertise in our Nation's schools. The program offers counseling and assistance to help participants identify teacher certification programs and employment opportunities.

Since its authorization in 1994, Troops to Teachers has helped over 3,000 active duty soldiers enter our Na-

tion's classrooms and make significant contributions to the lives of our students.

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These military personnel turned teachers have established a solid reputation as educators who bring unique real-world experiences to the classroom. They are dedicated, mature, and experienced individuals who have proven to be effective teachers, as well as excellent role models. They are also helping fill a void felt in many public school districts. Over three-quarters of the Troops to Teachers participants are male, compared with about 25 percent in the overall public school system, and over 30 percent of these teachers belong to a minority racial ethnic group.

In addition, a large portion of these teachers are trained in math, science, and engineering, and about half elect to teach in inner city or rural schools. Overall, the retention of these teachers is much higher than the national average.

Not surprisingly, Troops to Teachers is winning glowing reviews from educational administrators, teachers and legislators. Education Secretary Richard Riley praised the program as a new model for recruiting high quality teachers.

School principals and superintendents who have employed Troops to Teachers participants are overwhelmingly supportive of the program. In a 1995-1996 survey, over 75 percent of the principals and superintendents rated Troops to Teachers participants as above average or higher.

The authorization of this successful program is set to expire at the end of this year. My colleagues and I have introduced the Troops to Teachers Program Improvement Act in an effort to reauthorize the program and strengthen some aspects of it so it operates more efficiently and more effectively, and targets the educational needs of our students.

I hope my House colleagues will join me in preserving this education success story by cosponsoring the Troops to Teachers Program Improvement Act.

INDIA MISSILE TEST SHOULD BE SEEN IN CONTEXT OF CHINESE THREAT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MICA). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. PALLONE) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, in light of India's test launch of the Agni missile on Sunday, I want to state today or stress today that the U.S. should look at India's action in light of China's threat to the Indian subcontinent. We should view this step by India in the context of the ongoing threat posed by China, and the fact that Pakistan's missile development program has developed so quickly because of Chinese support.