

As always, there is a lot to choose from, but I think most people would agree that the way the major networks covered Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan's comments on the Republican tax proposal deserves a second look.

Anybody watching ABC, NBC, CBS or CNN would come away thinking that the Federal Reserve Chairman opposed the Republican tax cuts and felt them unwise.

Well, Alan Greenspan's comments were not exactly as they were portrayed. In fact, the Chairman warned against more spending. Those comments were ignored. In fact, the Chairman said that if the choice were between more spending and tax cuts, he thought tax cuts made sense, and that more spending would be the worst of all outcomes.

Surprise, surprise. We get spin from the networks.

STRENGTHENING AND MODERNIZING MEDICARE

(Mr. ALLEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ALLEN. Madam Speaker, anyone who has been paying attention in this country in the last year would think, would know, that we have got some problems with Medicare. The program becomes insolvent in the year 2015.

So let us look at this Republican tax cut proposal. It devotes \$792 billion for tax cuts and does absolutely nothing to strengthen and modernize Medicare. The GOP plan does not extend the solvency of Medicare by one day.

By contrast, the Democratic plan invests \$325 billion of the on-budget surplus over the next 10 years in the Medicare Trust Fund and extends it out to 2027.

The GOP plan contains absolutely nothing for prescription drug benefits. The Democratic plan contains \$45 billion over 10 years to help provide our seniors with help in buying their prescription drugs.

There is no question, this tax cut and helping Medicare, improving Medicare, providing the prescription drug benefit, they cannot both be done. Moreover, the surplus, frankly, is not there.

WESTERN SAHARA PRISONERS OF WAR NEED TO GO HOME

(Mr. PITTS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PITTS. Madam Speaker, the country of Morocco has been in the news a lot the last couple of weeks. This morning, I rise on behalf of 83 freed Moroccan POWs in the midst of the Sahara Desert. These men were originally imprisoned due to the conflict between Western Sahara and Morocco.

These prisoners were released in 1997 by Western Sahara as a goodwill ges-

ture when former Secretary of State George Baker, who was the emissary of the UN Secretary General, visited the Sahrawi people in their refugee camps. Eighty-five prisoners were released and filled with anticipation of going home. Unfortunately, two of the men have died while waiting for permission from their government to visit Morocco.

Last year I visited these released POWs in their camp. You can see these men in the photo around me.

Madam Speaker, some of these men have languished, along with the Sahrawi refugees, in the desert for 20 years. Yet, even though they are free, Morocco has not allowed them to return home to Morocco to their families.

Why? No one knows.

Madam Speaker, I urge the new King of Morocco as a gesture of good will to accept the freed Moroccan citizens so they can return home to their families.

ENACT PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS NOW

(Mr. STUPAK asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STUPAK. Madam Speaker, I rose just about a year ago to join my colleagues in offering a one minute on a proposed patients' bill of rights. We were discussing this topic in the House because the leadership of the majority, both in the House and the other body, had finally entered into the public discussion on adoption of a Patients' Bill of Rights.

I regret to say that my optimism was misplaced. I am sorry to say 1 year and 2 weeks later, we still have not passed the Patients' Bill of Rights.

Since that time, public clamor for a real, genuine Patients' Bill of Rights has only grown. The public recognizes that, like the first ten amendments to the Constitution, there are real people and real rights that need to be protected. Medical decisions which affect the very livelihood of people and their quality of life must be made by doctors, in consultation with patients, not insurance accountants. Patients must be able to hold HMOs liable, accountable, for decisions that affect their lives and the quality of life, not some travesty of an internal review process.

REPUBLICAN BUDGET PROPOSAL BEING MISREPRESENTED AND MISCHARACTERIZED

(Mr. BALLENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BALLENGER. Madam Speaker, if you take a look at this chart here, you will notice that the Republican budget proposal will reduce the debt held by the public by approximately \$2 trillion. You will also notice that the Republican debt reduction proposal bears absolutely no relation whatso-

ever to the rhetoric we are hearing on the other side of the aisle.

Democrat after Democrat, over the past several weeks, has come down to the House floor and railed against the Republican tax cut proposal, claiming that it would do nothing for debt reduction, do nothing for Social Security, blah, blah, blah. But our proposal reduces the debt by \$2 trillion. The Congressional Budget Office confirms this. Not only that, but the Congressional Budget Office scores our budget proposal as \$200 billion better on debt reduction than the Democrat plan. In other words, our plan reduces the debt more than the Democrats do.

How are we to take their rhetoric seriously? How can we possibly have an honest debate, when our budget proposal is routinely mischaracterized and misrepresented beyond any recognition?

All I can say is thank God for C-SPAN.

INTENSIFY WAR ON DRUGS

(Mr. TRAFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TRAFICANT. Madam Speaker, the Drug Czar said only 38 percent of teenagers in America have tried drugs, and he is all excited.

Now, look, I like the Czar. I think he is doing a good job. But 38 percent is not exactly a number we should be celebrating, folks.

Let us tell it like it is: Drugs account for 80 percent of all crime, 70 percent of all murder, 50 percent of all healthcare costs, and heroin and cocaine is as easy to get as aspirin in every city in America, and it all comes across the border. Our borders are wide open and our eyes are wide shut.

Beam me up. We do not have a war on drugs going on; we have a propaganda game going on in America.

THE LAKE TAHOE ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMIT

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Madam Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to Lake Tahoe. Mark Twain once said, as he described Lake Tahoe, it was "the fairest picture the whole Earth afforded."

With an estimated 30 percent of the trees and forests surrounding Lake Tahoe dead or dying, and the lake losing almost a foot of clarity a year, many environmental changes must be made to ensure that we pass on to our children the same wonderful gift of nature in the same pristine condition in which we found it.

A very important first step in this battle was taken when we hosted the Lake Tahoe Environmental Summit in July of 1997. As a result of these meetings \$48 million in Federal funds were

committed to the Lake Tahoe Basin for clean-up and conservation efforts. But most importantly, the majority of these dollars were available to State and local agencies of Lake Tahoe, and not a Federal bureaucracy.

The agreement reached at Lake Tahoe is a shining example of concerns of environmentalists, conservationists, and even private property owners are not mutually exclusive. I commend all those involved, and look forward to the second annual Tahoe Summit to report on the positive and cooperative efforts that would truly benefit this gem in the sky.

SUPPORT THE PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

(Mr. SANDLIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SANDLIN. Madam Speaker, insurance companies, there they go again, attempting to mislead and deceive the American public. Television ads that they are placing all across this country incorrectly state that a Patients' Bill of Rights will make insurance premiums skyrocket.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Madam Speaker, the State of Texas enacted these protections that the insurance companies claim will increase premiums. The Texas experience proves that the insurance companies are dead wrong. One of those protections that is most often cited is the right to sue an HMO if treatment is denied.

Texas enacted a similar provision in 1997. There have been 516 complaints filed, half in favor of the patient, half in favor of the plan. Only three lawsuits have been filed, three lawsuits. That is hardly an explosion in a population of 20 million people.

Texas has some of the lowest premium rates in the entire country, and a study from the Kaiser Family Foundation found that liability accounted for only 3 to 13 cents per person per month in premiums, 3 to 13 cents. Mr. Speaker, the Democrats are working to put the needs of patients first. Let us enact a real Patients' Bill of Rights, not a bill of goods.

THE TAX RELIEF BILL

(Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SAM JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, Americans do not want, need, or deserve the highest taxes since World War II. For too long, our tax system has punished the very virtues Americans live by: hard work, marriage, savings, entrepreneurship, and freedom.

Look what happens when we play by the rules. If we get married, the government punishes us with taxes. If we save and invest for our family's future,

we pay taxes on the earnings. If we work hard to earn more, we end up paying what is called an alternative minimum tax, and lose all our family tax credits.

Finally, if we build a successful business and try to leave it to our kids, they will probably have to sell it in order to pay taxes when we die.

We want to end the assault on American values of family, savings, hard work, entrepreneurship, and freedom. It is our money, and we deserve to get it back. Americans do not want or need the President to spend our money on big government.

CONGRESS MUST PASS A MEANINGFUL PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Madam Speaker, for the past 2 years the American people have consistently asked for reasonable health care reforms that put those decisions back in the hands of doctors and patients and out of the hands of insurance company bureaucrats. People want to be able to choose their own doctor, to have access to the nearest emergency room, to see a specialist when necessary, to be free from HMO gag rules that prevent doctors from discussing treatment options for them, and to have the right to hold HMOs accountable for their decisions.

This Congress can and should pass these reforms now. The Members of this body who are doctors, whether Democrats or Republicans, almost all agree that these measures will benefit patients, make our health system stronger.

In the past year, thousands of Medicare recipients have been dropped by their HMOs. Millions of Americans have health care without basic coverage protections. We must pass a meaningful Patients' Bill of Rights. It must reflect our values for quality health care in this country. If we do, we can once again make the doctor's office a place for medical decisions.

TAXPAYERS KNOW WHICH PARTY IS CAREFUL WITH THEIR MONEY

(Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Madam Speaker, for 40 years Democrats controlled Congress. For 40 years Democrats expanded government, spent beyond our needs, and called Republicans extremists or mean-spirited any time they tried to limit spending, cut wasteful government programs, and return power back to the State and local level. They have a 40-year track record of being the party for which fiscal discipline was the last thing on their minds.

So please, with all due respect, Democrat allegations that Republicans are being fiscally irresponsible for proposing tax relief in the face of increasing surpluses do not pass the credibility test. As C-Span junkies know, on virtually every amendment, on virtually every bill, Democrats attempt to increase spending and Republicans try to reduce spending.

How is it that increased spending is not a threat to fiscal discipline, but tax cuts are? Just how liberal am I to conclude the Democrat party has become if tax cuts are viewed as dangerous to the economy? One has to wonder just where they learned economics. Taxpayers know which party is careful with their money and which party is not.

WE NEED A TRUE PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

(Mr. WEYGAND asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WEYGAND. Madam Speaker, how many times have we heard about a woman being denied to designate her OB-GYN doctor as her primary care physician? How many times have we heard about patients being denied emergency room care because an HMO bureaucrat has said no to the billing? How many times have we heard doctors say, we need more time to stay for this patient, but the HMO has said no?

Sometimes these decisions cause harm, sometimes even death. The Declaration of Independence states that we are endowed with certainly unalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Serving as the foundation for our Bill of Rights, it is now time to call for a true Patients' Bill of Rights, a Patients' Bill of Rights that will provide real access to emergency room care, will strengthen the doctor-patient relationship, and most importantly, most importantly, provide patients with the right to hold insurance companies for wrongdoing, to be able to sue them when they are wrong.

Let us provide a true Patients' Bill of Rights, and declare a Declaration of Independence from the gag rules of HMOs. Please support a true Patients' Bill of Rights.

THE REPUBLICAN AGENDA IS THE BEST AGENDA

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHIMKUS. Madam Speaker, what is the Republican agenda? The Republican agenda is the best agenda for all Americans. B is for bolstering our national security, E is for education excellence, S is for strengthening retirement security, and T is for tax relief for working Americans.

Republicans have the BEST agenda. It is a positive, forward-looking agenda