

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, we have an historic opportunity to do what is right for America. We have an opportunity to make a real commitment to paying down our \$5.6 trillion public debt by committing 90 percent of our budget surplus to debt reduction.

Republicans are committed to paying down the national debt, to protecting the economy, and the economic prosperity of future generations of Americans.

The Clinton-Gore administration, on the other hand, have other priorities. They want to spend the surplus on more big government programs. Mr. Speaker, I learned in Economics 101 that this is irresponsible to spend money when we are in debt, especially when we have a \$5.6 trillion debt.

So I rise today to urge the administration to put their partisan and irresponsible agenda aside and join with this Republican Congress in committing 90 percent of the surplus to paying down our national debt.

Join with us to do the right thing for all Americans today and for generations to come.

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AMERICA SHOULD SUPPORT THE FREE ELECTIONS IN SERBIA

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the people of Serbia have spoken. I hope as the hours proceed, and maybe as we have been on the floor, I have not heard the latest update, that democracy will take hold and they will be free.

I met Mr. Milosevic, and actually went and sat in his office and asked him to promote peace. It was 1995, and he said to me, "I will do so." Some few short years later, I find myself in refugee camps in Albania looking at the threatened, intimidated, and frightened refugees that Mr. Milosevic had sent fleeing out of Serbia.

It is time now for him to lay down his leadership of despotism, and he should at least recognize that the people have spoken. It is time now for his nation to be free, to become part of the world community.

I would ask that they will be able to proceed as free citizens under the duly-elected new president. Mr. Milosevic has served his time, and unfortunately, it has not been a leadership of sharing.

I would hope that we would stand up and support the new and free elections of the people of Serbia, and include in that support the request that Mr. Milosevic, who hopefully will be found and, as well, be able to address the grievances against him, now knows that he no longer serves as president of that Nation.

THE WORK OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON BASIC RESEARCH OF THE COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE

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

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to talk a little bit about the work of the Subcommittee on Basic Research, a subcommittee I am honored to chair.

This subcommittee has had a busy and productive 2 years. In the 106th Congress, we have held a total of 25 oversight hearings, field briefings, markups, on a range of important and timely issues.

In addition, we have passed through the House two bills authorizing fire and earthquake programs under this subcommittee's jurisdiction, and oversight for the National Science Foundation, NSF, whose funding we authorize.

I believe the work we do in the subcommittee is truly unique. In our hearings on information technology, than on technology, education research, plant genomics, and biotechnology, for example, we have been able to glimpse the future, and through our oversight and authorization bills I hope we are able to shape that future, as well.

I am proud of our record and the collegiality and bipartisanship on the subcommittee. I look forward to continuing that effort in the next session.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff of the subcommittee who work behind the scenes to get things done. Stephen Eule, Peter Harsha, Mark Harrington, Sharon Hayes, and Steve Howell have made my job easier. I thank them for their good ideas and hard work.

I also compliment and congratulate our subcommittee ranking member, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) and her chief of staff, Jim Wilson.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to follow up on the comments made by the gentleman from Michigan, Mr. SMITH, and also related to comments I made a few moments ago about the importance of improving math and science education in this country.

As I mentioned in my previous comments, we are enjoying an immense economic boom at this time, much of which is due to the results of science and technology. In particular, it is due to the research which has been done over the past 50 years.

That is why the work of the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is so important, because if we wish to

maintain a good economy, if we wish to have our children have a good economy, we must make the same investment in scientific research today that our parents and grandparents made 20, 30, 40, 50 years ago, and which we are enjoying the fruits of today.

It is extremely important that we continue that research effort to improve the health, the lives, and the freedoms not only in our Nation, but of peoples throughout the entire planet.

I commend the gentleman from Michigan for his work. I hope this Congress will continue to show a willingness to fund scientific research and maintain our leadership among the nations of this planet.

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SPECIAL ORDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, and under a previous order of the House, the following Members will be recognized for 5 minutes each.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BILIRAKIS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. GEJDENSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEJDENSON addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. PETERSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PETERSON of Pennsylvania addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

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WHAT IS BEHIND OPPOSITION TO THE DEMOCRATS' MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLAN

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

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, earlier this year a confidential document prepared for House Republicans somehow found its way into the public realm.

It was not big news at the time, just some talking points prepared by Republican polling firms on the Democrats' Medicare prescription drug plan.

According to their analysis, one way to create opposition to the Democratic plan is to call it a one-size-fits-all plan or a big government plan.

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One cannot blame the public for bristling at those phrases. I do not know

anyone who likes big government for big government's sake. However, one can blame politicians for exploiting those terms instead of confronting the fundamental differences between the Democratic and Republican prescription drug plans. One can blame the drug companies and the chamber of commerce for spending \$40 million already and promises of another \$40 million on phony groups on television such as Citizens for Better Medicare.

The Democrats plan would add an optional drug benefit to Medicare. The Republican plan, the drug company plan, would bypass Medicare and subsidize private, stand-alone insurance plans.

So is the Democrats' Medicare prescription drug coverage a one-size-fits-all program as the Republicans and the prescription drug companies tell us? I do not think so.

It is difficult to conceive of a program offering more choice than Medicare. The Medicare program covers medically necessary care and services. Beneficiaries can see the health care professional and go to the facility of their choice.

Similarly, under the proposed drug benefit, enrollees can go to the pharmacy of their choice. FDA-approved medications prescribed by a physician would be covered under the Democrats' Medicare prescription drug plan.

Given this level of flexibility, how would a legion of new private health plans enhance the beneficiary's choice in any way that matters? It is more likely that the Republican plan, the prescription drug company plan, like any other managed care product, would restrict choice and add to the insurance and drug company's bottom lines.

Medicare is a single plan that treats all beneficiaries equally, provides maximum choice and maximum access for patients and doctors.

The Democrats' prescription drug coverage proposal embraces the same principle. Is that a one-size-fits-all program?

Under the Republican prescription drug proposal, under the drug companies' plan, Medicare beneficiaries would have to choose among private stand-alone insurance company prescription drug plans. They say that enables seniors to tailor their prescription drug coverage to their particular needs.

None of these private plans, however, will provide more choice to the Democrats' plan than the Medicare plan in terms of which medications are covered since the Democrats' plan covers all Medicare doctor-prescribed medications. None of these private plans could provide a broader choice of pharmacy since the Democrats' plan does not restrict access to pharmacies.

Under the Republican plan, under the prescription drug company plan, it appears that choice is actually code for "wealth." Higher-income seniors could, in fact, afford a decent prescription drug plan, one with the same level of

coverage as would be available to all beneficiaries under the Democrats' Medicare plan. Lower-income enrollees, however, would be relegated to restrictive alternatives. Some choice.

Is the Democrats' prescription drug coverage plan a big government program as the Republicans and the prescription drug companies' executives tell us? Hardly.

Medicare is a Federal Government program with the beneficiary population of 39 million. It is definitely big. But Medicare is also one of the most enduring popular public programs in the Nation's history. Medicare far out-ranks both employer-sponsored and individually purchased private insurance as a trusted source of health care coverage.

So when opponents of the Democrats' prescription coverage plan berate it for being one size fits all or big government, they, in fact, are berating Medicare itself.

In fact, the Republican prescription drug proposal, the plan from the big drug companies, which ignore Medicare to establish new private insurance policies, is an insult to the Medicare program. Their plan pays homage to those Members of Congress who favor privatizing Medicare. Parenthetically, I have to say I have not yet met anyone outside of Washington who wants to privatize Medicare.

It is no coincidence that the only way a Medicare beneficiary could avoid carrying multiple health insurance policies under the Republican plan, under the prescription drug company plan, is to join a private-managed Medicare-managed care plan.

As Congress and the presidential candidates debate the merits of competing prescription drug coverage proposals, watch for allegations to be thrown around like one size fits all and big government program. Because when applied to insurance coverage offering maximum choice in matters that matter, choice of provider access to medically-necessary care, which is what Medicare is all about, those, those threats, those accusations of one size fits all and big government program, those terms simply fall flat.

Bear in mind that more than the structure of prescription drug benefit is at stake. The future of Medicare hangs in the balance.

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VICE PRESIDENT GORE'S SOCIAL SECURITY PROPOSAL WILL INCREASE FUTURE PAYROLL TAXES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. SMITH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned about what it looks like might happen to the FICA taxes, the payroll taxes, if we move ahead with Vice-President GORE's proposal for Social Security.

This first chart reflects what the FICA taxes are now, 15.3 percent of

what a worker makes. Then what is going to happen in terms of when we start running out of money? There is not enough money in the Medicare surplus as early as 2006. Then if we continue with the same program without doing anything else, without getting a better return on some of this money that is coming into the system in Social Security Trust Fund and the Medicare Trust Fund, then to keep the same benefits that we have promised continuing we are going to, the taxes would have to go up. Either taxes would have to go up or benefits drastically reduced. We are not going to reduce those benefits.

But, also, let us make some changes now so that we do not have to let the taxes go up, as we see on this chart, to 22.41 percent versus 27.96 percent.

If Vice President GORE's Medicare prescription drug program goes into effect, then those taxes will have to go up to 47 percent of what one makes. Look, it is some time ahead, so one can say somebody else could worry about it. But these are our kids; these are our grandkids that are going to have to pay that kind of tax. Let us make these kinds of changes now.

Let me just reemphasize how serious this tax is today on the payroll deduction tax. Seventy-eight percent, 78 percent of American workers now pay more in the FICA tax for Social Security and Medicare than they do their income tax. We cannot allow these taxes to go up. We cannot simply say, look, we have got to put Social Security first or Medicare first and say, look, we are going to add these benefits. That is what the Vice President does.

Somehow the American people have got to look seriously at the consequences of simply the attractiveness of saying we are going to increase benefits without making some changes in the program to get a better return on the money.

The better return, as suggested by Governor Bush, is to start investing some of that money. Right now, the average return for one's Social Security money that is paid in in taxes is a real return of 2 percent. That is 7 percent less than the average return on equities. Let us balance it. Let us not do all equities. It is going to be limited stock investments. There is going to be safe investments that a person can invest. But it is going to be in their name, their account. If they die, instead of losing everything, their heirs get it.

Let me show my colleagues this third chart. It simply says, no new taxes. Let us not force ourselves into a situation where the payroll deduction has to go up and we have to increase taxes. We have got to have a strong resolution that we are simply not going to cavalierly do what is politically attractive today to get votes today and leave the problem and an increased obligation of higher taxes to our kids and our grandkids.

Again, if we do nothing, if we go with a Gore plan, the 15.3 percent that we