

benefits rationed more and more with every passing year.

I have heard a lot of talk in the last few months about the need to make tough choices in this budget. Well, the average senior on Medicare earns just over \$19,000 a year. About one-quarter of Medicare beneficiaries suffer from a cognitive or mental impairment, and many have at least one or more chronic medical conditions. I ask my Republican colleagues, what exactly is it about stripping these Americans bare of their health and economic security that qualifies as tough? There is nothing tough about stealing from the poor, the weak and the frail to give to the rich.

Our seniors, on the other hand, know all about tough choices. Do I buy groceries or do I buy prescriptions? Do I pay rent or do I pay medical bills? It hurts, but how much will it cost? These are tough choices. These are life-and-death choices.

With the passage of Medicare in 1965, we entered into a covenant with every American citizen. This budget breaks that promise and brings us back to square one. The Republican voucher plan ends Medicare. Instead, seniors will be on their own, with a measly voucher and forced to buy insurance in the private market, where all decisions will be profit-driven. More profits for insurance companies on the backs of seniors—sounds like a Republican plan to me.

This new voucher program amounts to a ration card, and the value of the voucher is not linked to increases in health care costs in the private market. Yet the costs of private health insurance have risen over 5,000 percent since the creation of Medicare—5,000 percent.

The analysis of the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office has estimated that in less than 20 years, the vouchers under the Republican road-to-ruin budget would pay just 32 cents on every dollar that a senior spends on health care.

Now, the Republicans have repeatedly stated that their budget gives seniors the same coverage as Members of Congress. Well, as a Member of Congress myself, I know that our health plans pay for about 72 cents on every dollar of our health coverage, not 32 cents on the dollar.

According to CBO, the voucher program will provide a ration of \$8,000 to seniors every year to purchase their health care from private insurance companies. Yet the private insurance premium charged by Blue Cross in 2010 for a Member of Congress was well over \$9,000. Does anyone honestly believe that sick senior citizens and people with permanent disabilities will be able to find coverage from private insurance for \$8,000 when they are now charging over \$9,000 to Members of Congress?

According to The Wall Street Journal, the average cost of health care for seniors over 65 in 2009 was \$11,743. If an

insurance company were to take on \$11,743 of risk for \$8,000, they would be out of business in short order. But Republicans don't believe their insurance company buddies will actually offer coverage for \$8,000 or even for \$11,743 just to break even. They know that seniors will have to go into their pockets for thousands of dollars as this plan hands Medicare over to the private insurance companies to make even more profits. In fact, CBO found that seniors will have to pay more than twice as much out of pocket as they do today.

This budget takes trillions from seniors and rations their care, and where does it shift the savings? Well, if you guessed permanent tax cuts for millionaires and a new tax break for corporations making billions, you guessed right. After more than a year of hurling lies and demagoguery about death panels and rationing care, Republicans on the panel before us have demanded that we restrict seniors to a health care ration card and ensure that those who cannot afford coverage on their own will be left to suffer or die. Well, therein is the real death penalty they once talked about. They pay lip service to Americans' responsibility to share the burden and instead steal from those who cannot afford an expensive lobbyist and give to millionaires and billionaires and companies that can afford much, much more.

I'm not speaking of playing politics. America knows that our budget is a statement of priorities and values, not purely dollars and cents. America's families set priorities with their own budget each and every day. And I respectfully and honestly disagree with the values and priorities that the Republicans have established in their road-to-ruin budget. Let's not end Medicare.

I'VE HEARD THAT SONG BEFORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. McCOTTER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McCOTTER. Ah, the new civility. I would like to start, Mr. Speaker, by thanking my Democratic colleagues this morning for disabusing me of an affliction. When I woke up, I found that I had a hankering to listen to Led Zepelin, and I couldn't figure out why. This has happened before, usually when I leave the TV on at night and they run one of those Rolling Stones '70s buy it now before it's more expensive or in the dustbin ads. So I was walking over here and I'm thinking, wow, is it because there's been a communication breakdown between the parties? It's possible. It's possible. I said, Is it because one of the nice Senators is wearing a cashmere sweater? It's possible. But, no, I was sitting here today when I realized why I wanted to listen to the melodious strains of Page, Plant, Jones, and John Bonham. It's because for the Democratic Party, the song remains the same.

Once again, seniors and children wake to the hysterical, frightening visage of specters of gloom and doom—Democrats. Once again, we are regaled with the Democrats' entitlement reform plan. It is called do nothing, spend everything, go bankrupt, benefits bye-bye.

We continue to see a party that does not understand you cannot lift an economy when it is crushed beneath the weight of Big Government. We continue to see a party ideologically zealous in spending your tax dollars on Planned Parenthood to the point where they would shut down the Federal Government to do it. And we continue to hear the fundamental crux of the issue of a potential government shutdown. The Democratic Party will shut down the government so they can spend more of your money. The Republican Party is committed to keeping the government open and spending less of your money.

In fairness, it is not just Led Zepelin they remind me of, because the reason we stand here today on the precipice of a government shutdown is because they did not do their work when they had total control of the United States Congress last year. They could not even pass a budget, let alone finish these appropriations which we are still dealing with well into April, let alone lay out a coherent strategy to do so when the parties changed power in this House.

□ 1030

The song remains the same, but the American people recognize the song and dance. They will not be fooled. They know that the major change that we see before us today in the fight over government spending is a very simple one, and a very simple choice. It is the difference between bankruptcy and solvency; and the Republican Party stands for solvency and for liberty.

IMPACT OF GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. BACA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, we find ourselves less than 24 hours away from abandoning our veterans—I state, from abandoning our veterans, our seniors, and our active duty military personnel. Why? You ask yourself, Why? Because Republicans refuse to budge from a fiscal plan that will cost our Nation 700,000 jobs and the anti-government tea party is dead set on shutting government.

In my district in California's Inland Empire, we face a 14 percent unemployment rate. My constituents need jobs. Our priorities now should be about creating jobs, not about shutting government. We all know the devastation of the consequences of a shutdown. Eligible seniors and disabled Americans would be unable to apply for Medicare and Medicaid benefits. Can you imagine someone that needs medical assistance and they can't get it, the impact

it will have on their life, the impact it will have on their behavior and on their families?

Veterans' service benefits would be delayed. Pay for our troops and their families would be delayed. And on the other side, you hear a lot of rhetoric about our troops and that we should pass this budget. But they don't talk about, they are not willing to cut any of the rich, or the millionaires and the billionaires. They want to protect the rich. They want to protect the oil companies. They want to protect the outsourcing of companies that go outside, but aren't willing to make the cuts that are necessary. I think everybody has got to have cuts.

It will also impact our Social Security claims that would go unprocessed. Federal vendors and contractors, their employees would go unpaid. Government housing assistance would be halted, and millions of tax refunds would go unspent.

In my home of San Bernardino County, a shutdown would mean no paychecks for 22,000 Federal employees and retirees. Think about the economic damage this loss of revenue would cause.

But instead of working on a compromise, I say instead of working on a compromise, because it takes two leaders and it takes other individuals, and HARRY REID is doing what is necessary in leading, it's the other side that has to compromise as well. It's not a one-sided team; it's a two-sided team. And when the chemistry is good on both sides, we should be able to come up with a compromise that is good for our Nation and our country.

But instead, Republicans have introduced a long-term budget that devastates our seniors and ends Medicare as we know it. The budget shouldn't be about flexing our political muscle. It should be about doing what is right for the American people, and this Republican budget makes all of the wrong choices.

The GOP plan increases suffering, I state, suffering for our seniors and young people while protecting tax breaks for the wealthy, while protecting tax breaks for the wealthy. The Republican budget eliminates guaranteed coverage for our seniors under Medicare which currently serves 48 million elderly Americans. It slashes Medicaid for seniors in nursing homes and Americans with disabilities. It increases college education costs for 10 million middle class students. And we need to invest in education. They are our future. If we don't invest in our students and their education, they cannot provide for us. We need to invest in them, not cut them. And, of course, it gives tax breaks to the big oil companies and companies that ship jobs overseas.

Seniors in my district live on a fixed income. Can you imagine living on a fixed income of \$1,900 a month or whatever income you have? It is very difficult to make your mortgage pay-

ments, put food on the table, and know how you are going to get by the next day. Or if you have any other emergencies.

We are a country; we are America. We are the greatest country in the world, and we should provide for every American that is here, regardless of who they are or where they come from. They can't afford to pay more health care or see cuts in Social Security benefits. We all agree, and it has been stated, we all agree that we must get our deficit under control.

But remember, Republicans had 12 years to do this and went out of control in their spending and didn't do anything when they had control.

CONTROLLING WASHINGTON SPENDING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BUCSHON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. BUCSHON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to remind the American people why we're here. We're here today because of the failure of the 111th Congress to pass a budget for the first time in decades. You might think that for one party that controlled the White House and both Chambers of Congress, this would be a relatively easy thing to do, but you have to try. In an effort to protect a few powerful committee chairmen and other incumbents in their own party, they made a political decision not to pass a budget because it had a \$1.5 trillion deficit attached to it. You can't run and you can't hide from the American people.

Now, even after the people have spoken in November, they are continuing to protect the status quo, protecting out-of-control Washington spending, and offering no solutions of their own other than raising everyone's taxes and demagoging anyone who puts forward a plan. Again, I would like to see their plan.

I began running to represent Indiana's Eighth Congressional District in October of 2009, an endeavor I had never undertaken before. I was a practicing physician, cardiothoracic surgeon. I decided to seek public office because of our government's inability to control spending. Let's remind everyone where the status quo has led us. It has led us to historic unemployment and a mounting debt that is mortgaging the future of our children and grandchildren.

But yesterday, our counterparts in the Senate and the White House showed different intentions. I can't stand before you today in good conscience not advocating for the men and women who have volunteered to wear the uniform of our great Nation. A notion that a bill to fund the troops for the remainder of the fiscal year is being threatened by a veto is preposterous.

This challenge to fix our government's spending habits is above politics and talking points. While I stand

here today in the people's House, individuals are playing petty politics while we offered a solution yesterday that pays our troops and avoids a government shutdown.

We passed H.R. 1 with a modest \$61 billion down payment on controlling Washington spending, and we have been criticized in the face of a \$1.5 trillion deficit. I implore the Senate and the White House to join with us here in the House and act to significantly reduce spending and avoid a government shutdown.

And I offer one last observation since I am new to Congress, a continuing frustration that I am finding here in Washington, D.C., and that is I am amazed by the resistance of some in Congress to tackling this problem, especially the fact that some continue to find excuses why we can't even consolidate programs and downsize government and make things more efficient here in Washington, D.C. at the very least. But I found this at a committee hearing the other day when the Democrats continued to make excuses after a Government Accountability Office report showed the excesses that we have here in Washington, D.C.

□ 1040

This is a serious issue we face together as a Nation. I began this conversation when I began running for Congress almost 2 years ago, and it's a conversation I continue to have with my constituents. This is an adult conversation about facts and our future.

Until we come to a solution that will put hardworking Americans and Hoosiers back to work and our government begins to act in a responsible manner when it comes to our Nation's fiscal issues, I will continue to have this conversation with my constituents and with the American people.

A GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN IS NOT ABOUT MONEY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Washington (Mr. McDERMOTT) for 5 minutes.

Mr. McDERMOTT. Mr. Speaker pro tempore, there's a joke going around in Congress: the difference between a Boy Scout troop and the House of Representatives is that a Boy Scout troop has adult leadership.

Now, I predicted a shutdown of this place more than a month ago, not because I'm some kind of prophet but because I saw the movie of the Gingrich shutdown in 1996. The same elements are here today that were there then. I don't want a shutdown. I know what it does. I think it's silly and stupid and hard on the American people and a lot of people are going to suffer, but the elements are there.

First of all, a number of Members came in new, a lot of them, who were absolutely sure that they knew what was right. Secondly, they had no experience in governing. They didn't understand compromise. "Compromise" was