

the Path to the Past eviscerates Medicare, forcing retirees to bear the brunt of cost increases and severely jeopardizing their access to health care, replacing today's guaranteed access with a limited voucher system.

Today, thanks to Medicare, every one of America's senior citizens has access to health care coverage. Before Medicare was enacted in 1965, roughly half of all seniors suffered without health insurance. The Path to the Past would send American seniors back to the times of scrambling to find coverage while always worrying how they will be able to afford rising health care costs on fixed incomes.

The Republican Path to the Past brings back the doughnut hole in Medicare part D prescription drug coverage. Under the doughnut hole, many seniors have been forced to pay thousands of dollars out of pocket for prescription medication because they weren't covered by part D.

I was proud to fix that inequity and eliminate the doughnut hole during the previous Congress. Unfortunately, the Republican Path to the Past brings it back once again, requiring many seniors to pay thousands of dollars extra for their prescription drugs. That's a past Americans don't want.

The Republican Path to the Past destroys Medicaid, replacing it with a vastly limited monetary grant to the States, forcing them to either reduce benefits to lower-income families or to reduce the number of eligible families or both. Currently, 34 million children receive health care through Medicaid.

From 1997 to 2009, the percentage of children without health insurance dropped from 13.9 percent to 8.2 percent, largely because of Medicaid. The Republican Path to the Past risks the future of millions of America's children by risking that health care coverage. That's a past America does not want.

The Path to the Past incredulously blames rising college tuition on efforts to make Pell Grants more accessible to kids and would return the Nation to a system where only the wealthy can afford college. Contrary to what the Republican budget states, college tuition costs have been rising long before the expansion of Pell Grants.

In fact, from 2002 to 2007, tuition costs rose 31 percent more than the rate of inflation, the worst 5-year increase in college costs in over 30 years.

In response, last year we reformed the student loan program, expanded the Pell Grant program, and allowed hundreds of thousands of students the ability to make higher education more affordable. The Republican Path to the Past returns the Nation to the years of rising tuition without any relief. That's a past America does not want.

The Republican Path to the Past ignores the economic recovery under way and indiscriminately slashes investments in ways that Goldman Sachs said will lower economic growth by 2 percent and increase unemployment by

1 percent. During the height of the Great Recession, for several months, 700,000 Americans lost their jobs.

According to Mark Zandi, an economist with Moody's Analytics and an adviser to Senator McCain's Presidential campaign, those policies would cost American workers another 700,000 jobs. The Economic Policy Institute projected a loss of 800,000 jobs, while the Center for American Progress said it will cost 900,000 jobs. That's a past America does not want to go back to.

The Republican budget proposal, the Path to the Past, returns us to the law of the jungle and the survival of the fittest, throwing the young, the elderly, the sick, and the disadvantaged on their own fates.

That's not an America I believe in.

□ 1210

AFGHANISTAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, as many people know, and I do not say this with pride, but for years, I've been signing letters to the immediate and extended families of those killed in Afghanistan and Iraq. I have signed over 9,966 letters. It is a constant reminder to me of the high cost of war.

Our country is in deep financial trouble. It continues to amaze me that we would raise the debt ceiling, spend money we don't have and cut much-needed programs from our seniors and children while we continue to spend \$8 billion a month in Afghanistan.

Karzai is a corrupt leader. His government is corrupt. He has stated that he would rather side with the Taliban than the United States. This is based on an article in the Washington Post on December 8, 2010. What sense does it make to sacrifice our young American lives, our money and our resources for a man who does not want our troops in his country? It simply does not make any sense at all.

According to a March 15 Washington Post/ABC News Poll, 73 percent of Americans want our troops out of Afghanistan this summer. Last week, every Member of Congress received an Associated Foreign Press article from Congressman PETER WELCH. I do not have time to read the whole article, but let me share some excerpts from his letter to each of my colleagues and his colleagues, and I will quote the letter from Congressman WELCH.

"I want to draw your attention to a recent Associated Foreign Press article detailing the funneling of USAID dollars to the Afghan Taliban, reportedly making Western reconstruction funds the main source of income for insurgents.

"According to the story, an estimated 10 percent of the cost of every development project is used to pay off the Taliban. The United States has

spent \$56.1 billion in Afghanistan since 2002."

Mr. Speaker, let me remind the Congress and the American citizens that the Taliban are killing and maiming American soldiers and marines. It is time that this Congress debate the Afghan war and to bring our troops home. Here we are talking about cutting spending for programs that help the American people, but yet we continue to send billions and billions of dollars to a corrupt leader. It doesn't make sense. Mr. Speaker, we could save American lives, which is the most important, but also \$8 billion a month if we were to bring our troops home from Afghanistan.

Mr. Speaker, I will continue to come to the floor once a week, and I will bring photographs in the way of posters to remind the American people and my colleagues in Washington of the price of war. Right beside me now is the Air Force Honor Guard at Dover bringing a hero home in a transfer case, which is known as a coffin as well, flag draped.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for this Congress to debate the issue of bringing our troops home from Afghanistan. How much longer can we afford to give lives of our young Americans to a corrupt leader? It makes no sense. I want my colleagues in both parties to awaken.

JIM MCGOVERN, Democrat, and WALTER JONES, a conservative, will soon have a bill that we will put on the floor to debate bringing our troops home. I want the American people to join us in bringing our troops home.

Mr. Speaker, as I do always when I close, I will ask God to please bless our men and women in uniform. I will ask God to please bless the families of our men and women in uniform. I will ask God in His loving arms to hold the families who have given a child dying for freedom in Afghanistan and Iraq.

And, Mr. Speaker, I will ask God to please bless the House and Senate that we will do what is right in the eyes of God for the American people. And I will ask God to give wisdom, strength and courage to President Obama that he will do what is right in the eyes of God for His people.

And I will close by asking God three times, please God, please God, please God, continue to bless America.

THE REPUBLICAN BUDGET

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

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, Congress this week will focus on the Ryan Republican budget, probably the most profoundly negative and cynical plan ever advanced by a major party in the House of Representatives.

There are lots of individual analyses that are available to Americans, not from spin masters, but from serious journalists and analysts. I strongly

hope that people will take the time to look at it. They will find in the course of their research that there are a number of very fundamental flaws.

First and foremost, there is no fundamental reform of our defense spending, something that is driving the deficit dramatically. We sidestep opportunities to reform agricultural programs. It actually takes us backwards on health care. And there are \$4 trillion of program cuts over the next 10 years, falling primarily on low- and moderate-income Americans. It is a hypocritical approach.

Last year, Americans were given television ads from Republican candidates accusing Democrats of slashing Medicare for senior citizens. Now we see that the Republicans are taking all of those proposed slashes in spending and using it to finance their program to reduce taxes for those who need it the least.

In addition, people will be able to verify that senior citizens, starting in 2020, will be bearing a far greater burden for paying for their own Medicare than ever in the Affordable Care Act in any of the reforms. It replaces a steep curve of increased Medicare spending, no doubt about it. That's why in the Affordable Care Act we embedded reform proposals to bend that cost curve. It's replaced without proposals to reduce Medicare spending. It just simply slashes the support that seniors can get. It's replaced with the much greater cost curve increase for private insurance. Their approach is to give a voucher to insurance companies to provide insurance for senior citizens for health care.

Bear in mind, the reason we got Medicare in the first place is because senior citizens' insurance policies were not profitable. They couldn't buy comprehensive health insurance in an affordable fashion before Medicare. What leads anybody to believe that somehow aging Americans are going to be more attractive to the health insurance industry in the future? And by replacing Medicare, which actually has reduced cost increases below what it cost in the private health insurance company, you are actually going to increase overall health care costs.

But nowhere is that cynicism more evident than in a bill that is coming to the floor, I think tomorrow, the legislation to end the Prevention and Public Health Fund under the Affordable Care Act. Already in States like mine we've received millions of dollars for prevention activities and for wellness clinics to help people stop smoking and to improve the training of health professionals. These are investments to help make Americans healthier in the first place and reduce the demand for health care costs.

There was a time, Mr. Speaker, when prevention was a bipartisan issue. In fact, in our deliberations in the Ways and Means Committee in last Congress, people on both sides of the aisle were talking about the need to help deal

with prevention programs to keep people healthy in the first place. What a sad state when one of the first actions of this Congress is to repeal this bipartisan concept of a prevention and public health fund.

RECOGNIZING HOME FARMING DAY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Illinois (Mrs. BIGGERT) for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize Home Farming Day, an initiative launched by the nonprofit organization Urban Farming in partnership with the Kraft Foods Triscuit brand. The event celebrates those who are growing food at home or with their communities and, in turn, nurturing and inspiring healthier eating habits nationwide.

Last year, the first Home Farming Day resulted in the planting of 50 new farms in unused urban spaces in 20 cities. I was pleased that my office could participate in the groundbreaking on one of those gardens in my congressional district.

This year, Triscuits and Urban Farming plan to replant all 50 gardens and add 15 new farms throughout the country, totaling 65 community-based home farms. Food grown at these community farms goes directly to the volunteers who grow the crops, along with their families and communities. Volunteers can also donate to local food banks for those that are in need.

In my home district, crops are delivered to the Loaves and Fishes Community Pantry in Naperville, Illinois, where they provide low-income families with fresh, healthy meals.

□ 1220

Mr. Speaker, from the White House to our own backyards and windowsills, more and more Americans are taking up the fun and healthy pastime of growing their own food. It is not unlike what many of our parents and grandparents did during World War II when they planted 20 million "victory gardens." I can recall stealing into my own mother's victory garden to eat the raspberries and gather crops of rhubarb, squash, and tomatoes.

In fact, home gardening already is an activity that most Americans enjoy. A 2010 Garden Writers Association survey found that 66 percent of Americans have some form of lawn or garden, and younger Americans between the ages of 25 and 40 are now gardening at the same rate as the general population. And Home Farming Day is an opportunity to encourage that trend, especially among young people in urban communities where fresh fruits and vegetables may be less available.

Whether on a kitchen countertop, in a balcony flower box, or at a community plot, home farming is a great way for people of all ages to celebrate natural living, and treat themselves to some fresh fruits and vegetables while they're at it.

It is a goal worth pursuing, and I'd like to commend Triscuit, the 109-year-old cracker brand manufactured in my congressional district, and the home farming movement for helping to show Americans how easy it is to grow fresh vegetables and herbs right in their own backyard.

I'd like to congratulate Urban Farming and their partners on their success in expanding Home Farming Day across the country, encouraging communities to utilize open spaces to bring fresh ingredients to our homes.

HOME RULE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia (Ms. NORTON) for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor today to celebrate the 41 District of Columbia elected officials and residents led by Mayor Vincent Gray and five members of the D.C. City Council who were arrested in front of the Hart Senate office building yesterday evening, and hundreds of other residents who gathered to protest their second-class treatment as American citizens by the Republican House, the Democratic-led Senate, and the administration.

The 2011 continuing resolution due on the floor this week contains a sinister trade that takes the District of Columbia's self-governing rights to spend its own local funds on abortion services for poor women, as many jurisdictions have long done. The CR also funds the start-up of a new, private school voucher program but only in D.C., about which no local elected official was consulted.

It is the House Republicans who have been on an undemocratic warpath against the District's home rule. But yesterday, residents did not spare Senate Democrats or the President who, in the end, accepted Republican demands. The House will hear from me again as I try to remove these anti-home rule riders; but this body has repeatedly turned a deaf ear to me on violations of the city's most basic rights to local control.

Congress continually and summarily refused my bill and several amendments to allow the District to spend its own local funds to avoid a shutdown of the city government that would have occurred with a Federal shutdown, even though only our local funds were involved.

Yesterday, however, Congress and the country heard from the people themselves. House rules do not allow Members to organize demonstrations, and yesterday's spontaneous outpouring of citizens, where I was not present, showed why the people must always speak for themselves. D.C. Vote organized yesterday's mammoth demonstration in a couple of days; and residents poured onto Constitution Avenue, anxious for an outlet for their accumulated outrage at being traded on a congressional auction block.