

prospered so well over the last 15 years, will now pay just a little bit more so that Americans can go back to work and so that those unnecessary tax breaks that have been given to the oil industry for a century—that 5, 6, \$7 billion a year that they've received on top of their trillion dollars of profit over the last decades—will go back into America's Treasury so that we can build America once again. We will make it in America.

The President is quite right: we can't wait. Americans can't wait. It's time for Americans to go back to work. The American Jobs Act will put Americans back to work without increasing the deficit and, in fact, by creating tax revenues for the American Treasury.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

AMERICA'S GREATEST GENERATION—OUR SENIOR CITIZENS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentlewoman from Missouri (Mrs. HARTZLER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mrs. HARTZLER. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the topic of this Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Missouri?

There was no objection.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, I am here to lead a very important discussion regarding America's Greatest Generation—our senior citizens.

I have the greatest respect and heartfelt affection for this special group of people. This respect and affection originated with the special relationship I had with my grandparents. I valued spending time with them and loved learning from them. I learned how to catch a fish and golf from Granddad Zellmer, how to clean and cook a fish from Grandma Zellmer, how to ride a horse and milk a cow from Granddad Purdy, and how to crochet and make homemade butter from Grandma Purdy.

Out of the love of my grandparents grew a love and respect for all senior citizens. I believe their wisdom should be sought and valued in our society and that generations should be linked to benefit from each other. As a teacher, I initiated programs to bring young people together with senior citizens, and wrote my master's thesis on it. I can tell you that it's a winning combination. Throughout my life, I have been dedicated to advocate for senior citizens. For over 10 years, I served on the Cass County Council on Aging. I helped raise money for our Meals on Wheels program and for other important programs to help senior citizens.

Now I'm honored to represent and to serve the great people of Missouri's Fourth Congressional District, which is home to over 120,000 seniors. You can trust that I will ensure that this cherished generation is never overlooked. There are many challenges facing our Nation's senior citizens: financial stress, health challenges, housing issues, and family difficulties. My Republican women colleagues and I want you to know that we care, that we hear your concerns, and that we are here to stand by you and to fight for you and for workable solutions.

□ 1830

I'm honored to have the privilege tonight of leading this discussion and introducing you to some of the most dedicated women in Congress who, like me, care about seniors and are fighting for you.

I would now like to yield as much time as she may consume to my good friend from just across the State line, a fellow farm girl and my travel buddy back and forth to the Kansas City airport, Representative LYNN JENKINS.

Ms. JENKINS. I thank the gentlelady from Missouri for yielding, and I appreciate my fellow Republican women stepping up this evening to have an honest fact-based discussion about one of our Nation's most valued resources—our senior citizens.

As I travel through Kansas each week, I always hear from folks who have had to tighten their belts over the last few years, and the overwhelming message I hear is that Kansans want their government to do the same, and seniors are no different.

While special interest groups, many in the media, and several of our colleagues across the aisle like to paint our Nation's seniors as weak, terrified of budget cuts, and beholden to the Federal Government for financial security, seniors in Kansas know better. These are strong men and women who have seen our Nation through a world war, cultural upheaval, and cyclical financial turmoil. They have always stayed true to the ideals and principles that make this country great. They have always been willing to make the necessary sacrifices to better their lives and those of their children and grandchildren, and they continue to display that same commitment during our current struggles.

But you know what? Just because our seniors are willing to sacrifice does not mean we should continue to demand it. It's time we, the beneficiaries of their hard work and sacrifice, stopped asking for more and allowed our seniors to have the security and certainty that they have earned through decade upon decade of hard work.

That's why I'm pleased to have supported the Republican House budget earlier this year that will save a Medicare system that could be bankrupt in 8 years if we do nothing, and it makes a plan to save Social Security, which

isn't far behind. Our plan saves these programs for the next generation while preserving 100 percent of the benefits for those Americans currently in or near retirement.

I'll continue to fight to ensure seniors don't see any cuts in their benefits, like the cuts that were provided for under the President's health care law, which cuts Medicare by \$500 billion and allows a board of bureaucrats to begin rationing care. We will, instead, continue to work to protect and strengthen these important programs.

The economic turmoil over the last several years has impacted all of us, including our seniors. Our Nation's senior citizens, the Greatest Generation, worked their entire lives to make this country what it is today. Keeping the promises made to them over the years must be a priority of this Congress and of this Nation.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, lady. I appreciate your great remarks.

Now I would like to yield as much time as she may consume to another farm gal, a fellow friend here, from South Dakota, KRISTI NOEM.

Mrs. NOEM. I thank the gentlelady from Missouri for recognizing me and for facilitating this wonderful discussion that we have tonight in front of us to really talk about our seniors and to talk about the challenges that they face and the promises that we've made to them that we intend to uphold and to keep for the years to come.

I rise to speak on this Special Order with our other Republican female colleagues to discuss a lot of important issues, and I want everybody to know across this country, in South Dakota we have more than the average share of seniors in South Dakota. We have a very high number, and all of us have seniors in our families—grandparents, neighbors, friends who are seniors and live under the programs and policies of this country.

Our seniors have worked hard. They've raised their families. They've raised grandchildren with strong values, with good work ethics that are extremely important to them to deal with a lot of the things that this life may throw at them. They paid into Social Security. They fought our enemies on foreign soil to defend our country and our freedoms. They have built businesses, and they literally have created the fabric of our society in America today.

Our Republican agenda reflects the deep gratitude that we have towards our seniors in this country. We're thankful for the country that they have given us. We're thankful for the values that they have taught us, and we intend to follow through on the promises that we've made to them.

So you're asking me today what are the promises that we've made to our seniors? The first promise we have made is to care for them. That's why we chose to step up and to save the Medicare program. That's why we

didn't choose to not address the problem that we have and the fact that it is going to go broke in less than a decade.

We also did this at a time when we can truly fix the program without impacting seniors who currently rely on the program. Future generations will need that program, and we did offer solutions for that. But our current beneficiaries, all of those who are 55 and older, will not be impacted if we do what the Republicans did this year and fix the program so that it's still around. Nothing will change for seniors under the plan the Republicans have put forward.

We have also made important promises to our seniors who are military veterans. South Dakota has a strong history of military service. Thousands of South Dakotans have stepped up and put their lives on the line to defend this country. Many of them have made the ultimate sacrifice, and for that we'll always be grateful.

Many of them came home wounded or forever changed by the experience. Veterans earned and deserve all of the benefits that they were promised going back to the founding of this great country.

We've worked to protect those programs and protect those veterans and the programs that they rely on. Some in Washington, in the media, try to scare our seniors. They try to scare them by telling them that we're going to get military veterans' pensions and payments and programs, and that we're going to cut the military veterans' benefits.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Despite vicious rumors and whatever the media and Democrats try to say, we are not going to let our veterans down and not follow through on the promises that we have made to them. We will continue to fight for those veterans' benefits.

Finally, we also promised our seniors that we would leave to our kids and our grandkids a nation that is as exceptional as they left us. That means that we're focusing on growing our economy, that we're reducing burdensome regulations that are driving people out of business and overseas. We're empowering small business at the same time, letting them make decisions that the government has no right making, and we're cutting wasteful spending that does nothing but bloat government and crowd out the private sector.

In closing, let me just say that I am proud to stand here with Republican women because we take our promises to our seniors very sincerely and seriously, and I know that we will do our part to uphold all of those promises that we have made.

Thank you for the time.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, lady, and absolutely we are going to fulfill those promises.

Now I would like to yield as much time as she may consume to the gentlelady from Texas, Representative KAY GRANGER, who wants to share a little bit her thoughts on seniors.

Ms. GRANGER. Thank you very much for yielding to me and thank you for the time where we get to talk about women and our seniors.

Women have made great strides in the workforce and in politics—actually, in all areas of life. But while we've had our careers, we're still the primary caregivers for our children, and we're the ones often responsible for managing our household budget.

Additionally, many of us have added the responsibility of caring for our aging and sick parents that we owe so much to, as you've talked about. We know the importance of being there for our parents, the way they were there for us throughout our lives, and that's why tonight the House Republican women are focusing on the issues that matter to America's seniors.

While Medicare and Social Security often make the headlines, Alzheimer's disease is a challenge that's touched nearly all of us in some way, someone we know, if not our own family. Beyond the emotional toll, Alzheimer's is a disease that will weigh down our economy over the next century if it's not addressed head on.

Nearly 6 million Americans are currently living with this disease, and every single day more than 10,000 baby boomers are turning 65. As these baby boomers age, one in eight will develop Alzheimer's. At a time when our government is looking for ways to save money, thinking about the economic cost of diseases like Alzheimer's is an important priority to consider.

□ 1840

Today, Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States, and we are seriously lacking in ways to prevent, cure, or even slow its progress.

This year alone, the economic impact of caring for Alzheimer's patients will cost our economy a total of \$183 billion. Unless something is done soon, the costs of Alzheimer's in the United States will total \$20 trillion by the year 2050; \$15 trillion of that cost will come from Medicare and Medicaid.

This is a disease that is not only heartbreaking, but it is also a disease that we can't afford if we don't take action now. That means making Alzheimer's a national priority. Leadership from the Federal Government has helped reduce the number of deaths from other diseases, such as HIV-AIDS, influenza, pneumonia, and stroke. We need to do the same thing for Alzheimer's.

We have the potential to create the same success that has been demonstrated in fights against other major diseases. By making Alzheimer's a priority, we can cut down on both the financial and the human cost of this disease. So I'm proud to stand with my Republican colleagues and talk about the issues that seniors and their families are dealing with every day. And we can find solutions.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, lady. I certainly share your commitment and

the heart-wrenching reality of Alzheimer's disease and our need to focus on it here.

Our next speaker is from the great State of Washington, Representative JAIME HERRERA BEUTLER.

Ms. HERRERA BEUTLER. I thank my colleague, and the Republican women who have joined us here tonight to talk about such an important issue and to share what we have been doing on behalf of our Nation's seniors, because I believe we need to protect the rights of our Nation's seniors, the right to make choices about their health care, the right to access what they spend their entire working lives paying into, the right to know that the programs that exist today will be there when they need them.

Now I would like to talk specifically about the right to make choices. Now in my corner of the country in southwest Washington State, more than a third of our seniors have chosen Medicare Advantage. That's 37 percent who have made this choice. In my most populated county, Clark County, half of the seniors have chosen to use Medicare Advantage. Part of the reason for this—and many times you see this happen—is because fewer and fewer doctors are taking traditional Medicare. It just doesn't pay enough to cover the bills. With Medicare Advantage, and you're a new Medicare beneficiary, you might have a shot at getting a doctor. This is very important when we have 10,000 baby boomers retiring every single day.

We stand with our Nation's seniors when it comes to—and I say “we,” my Republican colleagues and myself—when it comes to accessing programs they've spent their whole lives paying for.

The Medicare Board of Trustees and the Congressional Budget Office, CBO, two nonpartisan groups who are tasked with figuring out what the cost of bills are, and that's CBO and Medicare, the trustees are tasked with the financial responsibility of keeping Medicare on the straight and narrow. Both have said within the next decade Medicare goes completely bankrupt. So if you are at home and you're watching this, the one thing you need to know is doing nothing is not an option. Ten years, 10 years, and Medicare goes insolvent. You know what that means? It means that those seniors who have paid their whole life into this program are suddenly going to be faced with choices. Are they going to face cuts in benefits or more limited services? Insolvent, completely insolvent. We have to do something, which is why earlier this year my Republican colleagues and myself joined together to put forth solutions for Medicare, to save it and to protect it. Those folks who have paid into this program their whole life deserve to pull that money out when it is time to access it, which means we need to take action now.

I urge my colleagues in the Senate to consider the House-passed budget because what it does is protect retirement benefits for everyone who is 55

and older, completely keeps it as it is. And then for those in my generation who are younger, who are coming up the pike, it changes it necessarily so that we can also access those benefits we will pay into.

So I'm excited today to join with my colleagues to make sure that we protect these important programs. Seniors have a right to these programs, which is why we are stepping forward. We are going to stand with them to make sure that what they've paid into, they'll be able to access when it comes time.

The seniors in southwest Washington have spent years planning for their retirement. My colleagues and I will continue to take the lead when it comes to protecting programs like Medicare and their choices within Medicare. We have fought and will continue to fight against the credit card spending and against that mentality that jeopardizes this program because our seniors deserve that which they have paid into.

Now the Republican women that have joined me tonight on the floor to talk about these important issues, we understand that our Nation's seniors have rights, and they are looking to us to protect those rights, to protect Medicare for them and for future generations.

Mrs. HARTZLER. I thank you, JAIME.

I am now happy to yield to my good friend and fellow runner from the great State of Ohio, Congresswoman JEAN SCHMIDT.

Mrs. SCHMIDT. I thank my good friend from Missouri.

You know, I often talk about kitchen table politics in this well because as Ronald Reagan said in his farewell speech, all good ideas begin at the dinner table. And they do.

Look at this poster. This is a poster that I think really illustrates what's going on in families all across America, including our seniors, and that is, how are we going to pay our bills, and how are we going to move to the future? It's a huge issue, and it's one that this Congress needs to address in many ways.

The U.S. Census says that over 40 million Americans today are 65 years or older, almost 20 percent of our American families. Almost 20 percent of those sitting around that kitchen table. These are an incredible group of people. These are the people who fought in World War II, that created the Greatest Generation. They fought in Korea, sustaining the Greatest Generation. And today, they are now faced with so much anxiety and uncertainty in our Nation.

One of the things that I think we have to do in Congress is to erase that anxiety, whether it's through the financial markets, to ensure that we are putting forth programs that allow our banking systems to work effectively so that they don't have to be concerned with what the cost of banking is going to be or what their financial assets are going to be, to make sure that our

businesses are flourishing in this country and are not saddled with unnecessary regulations that constrict them from going forward, to move within the economy. In other words, we have to get our economy moving. It is so important for our Nation, especially for our seniors.

But I think that there are some other things that we have to talk about with our seniors as well. You know, as we sit around the kitchen table and we worry about our bills, they also worry about, not just how they're going to pay their income tax, but the mammoth issue of paying the income tax. And for seniors, instead of having to go to an accountant and use their precious dollars to figure the whole system out, maybe we should pass H.R. 1058, the Senior Tax Simplification Act of 2011. You know, this is a bipartisan bill. If passed, it would direct the Secretary of the Treasury to make available a new Federal income tax form similar to the 1040-EZ form for people who have turned over 65. It would make the completion of the Federal income tax return simpler, faster, easier, and less costly for most of our American hard-working seniors.

I think another bill that we have to really look at, and this is the one that I really want to focus the rest of my talk on, is the repeal of the death tax. This is an issue that I've had to personally face in my life. I grew up on a family farm, and there's nothing better than being raised on a farm. It's the best way you can raise a family, and you do a lot of talking at that kitchen table.

When my dad was seeing his declining days, he realized if he didn't do something, hire a fancy attorney at a lot of money an hour, he wouldn't be able to pass that farm along to his kids. So he did some estate planning, but it wasn't enough. And at the end of the day when my father passed away, my brother, sister, and I had to make a collective decision to sell personal assets to just be able to keep that farm because we want our children and our grandchildren to have the same experience that we had.

And I think, how often is this occurring unnecessarily? And it's not just the family farm, it's the family business, whether it is a manufacturing business, whether it's a winery, whatever the business is. If it's a family business, why do we have to worry as we see our declining years how we're going to do some tax structures and pay an insurance plan and whatever else is out there to try to keep a part of it for our children.

□ 1850

It's counterproductive, because in the end the Federal Government may get a piece of money at your death. But that's the end of the money they'll ever get from you or your family.

Ending the death tax won't hurt our economy. It will only improve our economy. And for our seniors that sit

around that kitchen table that may be what we call land poor—have a lot of money in the land, but not a lot of money in the bank—they won't be forced to make the same decisions so many of my friends had to make when I went to their family funerals. And they said, By gosh, we're going to keep Dad and Mom's farm. We're not going to get rid of it. They weren't as fortunate as my sister, my brothers, and I were that we had some personal assets that we could use to keep our farm. They had to sell theirs. And what's left, brick and mortar?

It's a serious issue. We need to repeal it. I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to do this. It will not only move our economy forward, but for our hardworking American seniors it will alleviate that anxiety at the kitchen table.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend and colleague from Missouri, Mrs. HARTZLER for hosting this Special Order on seniors, a group to whom we owe so much.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, over 40 million Americans today are 65 years of age or older. That's almost 20% of our American family.

These are the folks upon whose shoulders we stand today. They are the ones who have carried us through the good times and the bad.

Today's seniors are an incredible group of people. They have witnessed a lot of history, and, in fact, they have made a lot of history.

They served in World War II, the Korean Conflict, and the Vietnam War. They fought and bled on the battlefields of those wars, places such as North Africa, Normandy, Iwo Jima, Pork Chop Hill, Outpost Harry, and Hamburger Hill.

During those wars they built our ships, our tanks, and our planes; they plowed the fields and raised our crops; they manufactured the millions of items necessary to keep a nation at war amply supplied.

Between wars, they built our skyscrapers and our interstate highway system; they developed our space program and landed men on the moon; and, they even invented the first computers.

And, most importantly, while they were accomplishing all these great feats, they also found time to fall in love, to get married, and to have families.

I think it goes without saying that we owe our seniors a huge debt of gratitude. Still, I want to take this opportunity to say to our seniors in this great country, thank you. Thank you for all that you have given and for all that you have sacrificed and for all that you have done for your country and your fellow Americans.

Mr. Speaker, it was with our seniors in mind, and as an expression of gratitude to them, that I proudly co-sponsored three bills of special interest.

The first bill, H.R. 436, is known as the Protect Medical Innovation Act of 2011. This bill, which has support from both sides of the aisle, would, if passed and signed into law, amend the Internal Revenue Code to repeal the excise tax on medical devices.

Eliminating this excise tax would allow medical device manufacturers to better spend that money researching new products. The development of these potential, new medical devices would, ultimately, provide higher health

care standards and lower the costs of health care.

The second bill, H.R. 1058, is known as the Seniors' Tax Simplification Act of 2011. This bill, which also has support from both sides of the aisle, would, if passed and signed into law, direct the Secretary of the Treasury to make available a new federal income tax form similar to Form 1040EZ for individuals who have turned 65 as of the close of the taxable year.

It would make the completion of federal income tax returns simpler, faster and easier for most seniors.

Finally, the third bill, H.R. 1259, is known as the Death Tax Repeal Permanency Act of 2011. This bill, like the previous two bills, also has support from both sides of the aisle.

It would, if passed and signed into law, amend the Internal Revenue Code to: (1) repeal the estate and generation-skipping transfer taxes, and (2) make permanent the maximum 35% gift tax rate and a \$5 million lifetime gift tax exemption.

Having spent decades working hard to develop and accrue assets, a person should be able to convey those assets, upon his or her death, to whomever he or she chooses, without the heavy hand of the government reaching in to steal a portion.

Estate taxes are especially harmful to farmers, ranchers, and small business owners. They need to be eliminated.

In conclusion, I want to say again to our seniors, thank you.

I also, once more, want to thank my good friend and colleague, Mrs. HARTZLER, for facilitating this evening's discussion and focusing on a segment of our society that is so deserving of our time and attention and to whom we owe so much.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, JEAN. Well spoken.

Now I get to introduce the vice chairman of our conference and our good friend from Washington, Representative CATHY MCMORRIS RODGERS.

Mrs. MCMORRIS RODGERS. Thank you very much, VICKY, and I am proud to join a dynamic group of Republican women tonight committed to preserving the American Dream, promoting economic growth, and protecting America's seniors.

We have a story to tell. And it's a story not just of our children and our grandchildren, but also of our parents and our grandparents, of the men and women who raised us, who contributed and fought for this great country, and of the generation that has actually been hit the hardest by the economic downturns. One of these seniors is my own dad.

This summer, when President Obama actually threatened to withhold Social Security checks and not to reimburse Medicare providers, my dad called me and said, Well, CATHY, I might be moving in with you; and, no, I won't be babysitting.

President Obama was wrong, and yet seniors all across this country were threatened and scared by that statement. They continued to be frightened by the administration's policies.

Let's just take a look at Medicare. It's a program that both Republicans and Democrats agree is unsustainable.

Yet, today, try to find a doctor who will take a new Medicare patient in America. It is impossible or difficult. The average couple over the course of their lifetime, when they turn 65, will have paid just over \$100,000 into Medicare, and they will pull out of that program over \$300,000. It's not too difficult to do the math. It is unsustainable. The system is going bankrupt, and now is the time to improve it.

Last year, we saw a health care bill pass that is actually going to make it worse. The President's health care bill will actually give 15 unelected bureaucrats in D.C. the power to cut Medicare and drive providers out of service. The Republicans want to give patients the power to put market pressure on providers and make them compete.

We are here tonight as daughters committed to helping our parents and their entire generation of hardworking Americans ensure that this program does not go bankrupt over the next 10 years. We refuse to let that happen. We're committed to finding the right answers to improving, reforming, and protecting a program that our parents have contributed to for decades.

And so this is our moment. It's our moment to make real changes for America. It's our moment to listen to each other's stories, and it's our moment to protect our seniors, their benefits, and their access to quality care. We're going to continue to do this for many years to come to share the great story of the American Dream and our senior citizens who embody it.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to participate tonight.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, CATHY.

Now I would like to yield as much time as she would like to my good friend, a neighbor on the east side of Missouri—Tennessee here—Representative DIANE BLACK.

Mrs. BLACK. Thank you for yielding your time, my dear friend from Missouri. It's very good to be here today as Republican women and lifting up seniors.

When I think about the seniors in my life, my grandmother and my grandfather, I really hope that my children and grandchildren will think the same way about me. Because when we ask people who are their heroes, so many times what we hear is about their grandmothers and their grandfathers. And that is because they have so much to offer, especially the Greatest Generation—the generation that right now we are trying to protect every benefit that we can for them because they have worked hard and they have put money into the system and they deserve to be cared for.

Now, one thing I do know about seniors, having worked with seniors in home health care as a nurse, is they really feel like many times they don't have choices. Our seniors, just because they turned 65, should not be having their choices taken away. We shouldn't think that they can't make good choices. And that's exactly what the

health care bill that was passed by the Democrats last year, the Patient Affordability Act, does. It removes the ability for them to make choices.

In particular, the Independent Payment Advisory Board, also known as IPAB, is a group of 15 unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats that are assigned by the President; and their job will be to cut the costs and limit access for our seniors to care. They will have the ability to deny care and not give choice to our seniors. This is wrong.

Our plan, the Path to Prosperity, would give our seniors choice. It would not affect those 55 or older, but it would give those 54 and younger an opportunity to be able to have choice in their program. We address the unsustainable growth of Medicare so the program does not bankrupt us in 10 years so that we can have money in the bank for our seniors as they age.

It is only fair and right that our seniors should have choice and that they should have the care that they put into the bank and they so deserve. Let's give seniors their choice.

I thank my friend for yielding.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, DIANE. Now I am happy to introduce my good friend from the great State of Alabama, Congresswoman MARTHA ROBY.

Mrs. ROBY. Thank you so much for having this Special Order tonight. It's so important for us to have the opportunity to speak to America, but particularly to home in on our seniors back home.

Of course, throughout my travels back through Alabama during our district work periods, I repeatedly hear two things from seniors in Alabama: When is Congress going to pass a budget, and How is Congress, with all of our budget woes, going to preserve Social Security and Medicare? And the failure of Congress to address these concerns in an honest way threatens the economic security of America's seniors. Seniors deserve better than empty promises from a government that is broke. They deserve straightforward, honest answers and real solutions.

I, too, like many of the women that have spoken tonight, have a grandmother. I call my grandmother "Gaga." I have to look "Gaga" in the eye as a Member of Congress and express to her my sincerity in making sure that we are taking care of our seniors.

We all agree that we're facing a serious budget crisis in Washington. It's been more than 900 days since the Senate has passed a budget. I would like to say this is ridiculous. A budget is a basic financial plan for our country. It is a vision for America's future. Approving a budget is a fundamental task for Congress. What business would operate without a basic budget for 3 years?

Republicans in the House have passed a bold budget plan that clearly addresses some of the biggest financial issues that we face. The House Republican

budget addresses Washington's reckless spending. It is an honest, detailed, concrete plan to put our budget on a path to balance and our economy on a path to prosperity through job creation.

Under the Republican House budget, seniors 55 and older will not be affected in any way. As I think about my grandmother that I have already talked about, I have to reiterate this point. It is so important: seniors and those that are 55 and older will not be affected by our Republican plan. They will not be affected. Their benefits will not change. After paying into the system for years, we made a commitment to those seniors, and we must follow through.

□ 1900

For those of us who are 55 and under, we must take steps to ensure that Medicare will still be available when we retire and available for our children and our grandchildren. This is common sense. We know that without reform and repairs, these entitlement programs simply will not be in existence for us when we retire. Without reform, they will collapse. And the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office anticipates that Medicare will go bankrupt by 2020. It is clear that these programs are not sustainable in their current form, and actions must be taken before it is too late.

What proposals has this administration put forward to address these concerns? None of us in this room have yet to see a solid plan for action. By failing to address the problem, this administration is failing our seniors. Rather than offering solutions, the administration is continually providing our seniors with misleading information regarding the Republican proposal. Let me say it one more time. Those 55 and older, under our plan, will not be affected as it relates to their benefits.

Washington's failure to enact policies that promote long-term economic growth and balance the budget is creating uncertainty for employers and consumers alike. It is time that Washington get serious and put our fiscal house in order.

There are 15 bills—now 16, after today—waiting in the Senate for action that will put Americans back to work if the Senate will only take that action. Congress must act now. It is what we were sent to Washington to do, and protecting our seniors is a huge part of that.

Thank you so much again for hosting this hour tonight and letting me, on behalf of Alabama's Second District, be a part of it.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Absolutely, lady. Thank you.

It is important that we get the truth out and that seniors have an opportunity to hear the truth about our bills and the steps that we are taking to try to protect and defend them.

Now I get to introduce to you my fellow colleague from the great State of North Carolina, Representative RENEE ELLMERS.

Mrs. ELLMERS. Thank you so much, and thank you for leading this Special Order tonight. It's so important.

You've heard from my fellow women colleagues the discussion we're having about our families, our seniors, Medicare, Social Security, and the importance of operating under a budget. We continue to grapple with these issues because here in the House of Representatives we've passed numerous bills, we've passed the repeal of the President's health care bill, and yet only to go on to the Senate and not be taken up for a vote.

You heard my fellow women colleagues discuss how we've passed 15 bills on to the Senate, including the repeal, with no action whatsoever. The American people are calling for jobs, the American people are calling for a change in our economy, and those bills will take care of that issue. Those bills will set us on a path towards recovery, and yet we continuously play politics on the Senate side. We don't bring these things for a vote.

We're here tonight talking about all these issues that affect our families, again, our seniors. Our seniors are so concerned about what's going to happen in the future. Our seniors have paid into a system their entire life, into Social Security and Medicare. They deserve those benefits back.

As a nurse, taking care of seniors was part of my core health care life, taking care of seniors and ensuring that they're going to receive good care throughout the remainder of their life. And they've paid into that benefit willingly. They paid into that benefit and deserve to get it back. They don't look at Medicare and Social Security as budgetary issues. They look at these as benefits that they deserve, and it is incumbent upon us to make sure that they receive them.

You've heard my fellow women colleagues reiterate over and over again that if you are 55 and older, through our House-passed budget they will not be affected. Anyone 55 and older, no benefit is changed whatsoever, and yet in the Senate that budget is not taken up for a vote.

The American people are looking for answers. The American people know the issue. They understand, because we have made the point over and over and over again, that Medicare, down the road, just a few years down the road, will be bankrupt because of the situation that we're in today.

Seniors are calling my office every day concerned that as Republicans we are going to ruin Medicare for them and that somehow they're going to lose that benefit. I can tell them honestly that is the last thing that any of us as Republicans want to do. In fact, the problem lies with the President's health care bill that was passed in the 111th Congress because, in that bill, a half trillion dollars was taken out of Medicare, and put into place was a 15-person panel, which you've also heard my fellow colleagues discuss, IPAB,

Independent Payment Advisory Board. Fifteen individuals, 15 bureaucrats will be able to decide what Medicare will pay for and what they will not, essentially taking away the patient-doctor relationship.

My husband is a surgeon. I don't want my husband to have to sit down with his patients and discuss what they cannot do because Medicare will not pay for it. But that, unfortunately, is the future if we are not able to remove this, if we are not able to repeal, as we have already passed here in the House.

My fellow colleagues are working very hard—very hard—to rescue Medicare from the position that it's in right now because it is doomed to failure. But, unfortunately, this issue has been kicked down the road through previous administrations, through previous Congresses. But we can no longer allow this to go on. We have to address the issue now. And I believe that our seniors understand this. And I believe that if we can continue to give them this message that we are in no way wanting to harm the benefits that they're receiving now or the benefits that they will be receiving if you're 55 and older, we will be able to accomplish that.

But again, the calls that are coming into my office—that I am more than willing and my staff is more than willing to answer these issues—need to be going on to the Senate. They need to be going to the Senate and asking why these issues are not being brought up. Why are we not voting on these bills? Why are we not passing a budget?

You've heard my colleagues say it's been over 900 days since the Senate has passed a budget. There is no household that can function without a budget, and there is absolutely no business that can function without a budget. Our seniors understand that, too, because they have lived very responsible lives and deserve all of the benefits that we should be providing for them.

So thank you again for holding this very important Special Order. And to those seniors out there, we are working very hard for you, and we will continue to do so.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Absolutely. And I know that you would agree that it's a privilege to talk about our seniors tonight, and your background in health care certainly lends a lot of expertise to this issue.

I have another friend and colleague who is from the same great State of North Carolina. And I think it's interesting. I learned something here, VIRGINIA, that you're from Grandfather Community, and we're talking about seniors, so it's appropriate. My good friend, Representative VIRGINIA FOXX.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you very much. I want to thank our colleague from Missouri, Congresswoman HARTZLER, for leading this important effort tonight to highlight the concern that Republican women have for the millions of seniors that we represent in Congress.

And, yes, I do come from a little community in western North Carolina

that's called Grandfather Community, because there is a mountain there called Grandfather Mountain that's one of the highest mountains east of the Rockies. It's the second highest mountain east of the Rockies. And I have to tell you, when people come and see the beautiful view I have and say, "How can you leave this to go to Washington?" I tell them it isn't easy. But I think that we're doing important work here, and it's important that we continue to do this work and represent, I think, the majority of the people in this country. I think highlighting this is very important.

And it's interesting. My colleague from North Carolina who just spoke, Congresswoman ELLMERS, and I did not exchange notes, but we both were on the same wavelength in terms of what we wanted to talk about. I read my own mail, I answer all my own letters, and I'm astounded at the number of letters I get from seniors who tell me they're very concerned about the health of the Medicare and Social Security programs.

□ 1910

They are concerned, and they've been misled into thinking that Republicans want to do something negative to those programs. It is amazing the misinformation that's out there about Republicans and our attitude toward Medicare and Social Security. In fact, it's Republicans who have a plan to save Medicare and Social Security, and that's what I tell seniors.

But they've heard that the Congressional Budget Office has projected that Medicare part A would be bankrupt in 10 years; and they know they've paid into these programs, and they're relying on them to provide critical medical care for them when they need it.

In the past, Congresses have taken a pass on reforming these programs to keep them solvent for both today's seniors, as well as for future generations, who are currently paying into them, like we are. But the House Republican Path to Prosperity budget plan provides a way forward. It ensures that Medicare lives long past 2020, when it's now projected to be bankrupt.

The Republican plan, as my colleague from North Carolina said, does nothing to impact Medicare benefits for anyone 55 or older, but it will improve the program so that those 54 and younger will have access to the same kind of health care program enjoyed by Federal employees and Members of Congress. We're often criticized for having a separate program, but this will allow the seniors to participate in the same kind of program that we participate in.

It's far better than letting the program wither on the vine, which is what those who refuse to take action would allow to happen. And again, as my colleague pointed out, it's our friends on the other side of the aisle who voted to cut a half trillion dollars from Medicare.

Not a single Republican voted to do that. Our effort has always been to

save Medicare, to save Social Security. And we have the plan to do it, the Path to Prosperity budget and its plan to save Medicare. It's the only plan that preserves Medicare for today's seniors and for future generations.

I think this Special Order will help us get the message out to our constituents and those who are constituents of other Members of Congress; and I want to thank you, Congresswoman HARTZLER, for putting on this Special Order tonight.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you so much, VIRGINIA.

Now I would like to yield time to another good friend from New York, ANN MARIE BUEKLE.

Ms. BUEKLE. Thank you very much.

Mr. Speaker, I am so proud to stand here this evening with my fellow Republican female Members of Congress, and we stand here tonight united on behalf of our seniors.

I come before the House tonight, Mr. Speaker, not only as a nurse and someone who's been involved in health care most of my professional life; but I come here as the daughter of a 90-year-old senior citizen.

I rise here tonight to express my appreciation to my mother and to all the other seniors who've made such valuable contributions, both in my district and throughout the United States of America. The seniors of today have fought wars, they've educated us, they've helped to build infrastructure and technology that has led the way to our modern life.

Today's seniors are still busy enriching our society. Some of our seniors are busy in the community with care giving, with volunteering, with sharing important life lessons with their children, with their grandchildren and with their neighbors.

Yet some seniors, Mr. Speaker, in today's economy find themselves working later in life; and when they finally have the ability to retire, they will be dependent on Social Security and Medicare, programs that they have paid into their entire lives.

Mr. Speaker, America must honor its obligations to our seniors. We must achieve bipartisan solutions that don't cut our seniors' benefits but, rather, ensure continued existence of these programs.

I'm so saddened by the calls I get from seniors day in and day out, Mr. Speaker. They call my office, they write letters, and they're so fearful because of the misinformation that they have been given.

I want to stand here tonight with my Republican colleagues and ensure our senior citizens we are protecting your back. We are protecting Medicare and Social Security, the programs that you rely on. We want to assure them they don't have to worry, that we will take care of them. We will honor our commitment to them, just as they honored their commitment to the United States of America.

I thank the gentlewoman from Missouri.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, ANN MARIE.

I now yield to the woman from Wyoming, Representative CYNTHIA LUMMIS.

Mrs. LUMMIS. I thank the gentle lady from Missouri.

Among the topics we've been discussing tonight is the effects of ObamaCare, the Affordable Care Act, on Medicare. One of the things that I believe is the most egregious is that when the \$500 billion was taken out of Medicare to fund ObamaCare, it puts Medicare in a position where access to Medicare becomes a problem; and it becomes a big problem in States like mine, the State of Wyoming, a very rural place. We've got a dearth of physicians.

Every time a Medicare patient walks into their offices, that physician is losing money because the doctors are reimbursed at amounts less than the cost to provide the service. That's happening elsewhere in the country as well, Mr. Speaker.

We know from what the former CBO Director, Douglas Holtz-Eakin, said at a hearing in July of this year, and I quote, Today, Medicare coverage no longer guarantees access to care. Seniors enrolled in the Medicare program face barriers to accessing primary care physicians, as well as medical and surgical specialists.

He cited an example of the clinics that Mayo has in Arizona that are no longer accepting Medicare patients into their primary care facility. This is happening all over my State. I think it happens a lot in rural areas.

So the concern that we have of taking money out of Medicare and not using it to fix physician and hospital compensation, and, instead, taking it to create a whole new program for non-seniors was a big mistake, a huge, huge barrier to making sure that seniors and seniors-to-be, such as people in my age group, those of us 55 and older, will know that we have access to Medicare, the Medicare that we've paid into.

I commend my colleagues for having this Special Order tonight and raising these issues. I want to commend you and thank you for the opportunity to participate as well.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, CYNTHIA. I appreciate it.

And now my friend from West Virginia, Representative SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO.

Mrs. CAPITO. Thank you. I want to thank my colleague for sponsoring this Special Order. I know we're running close to being out of time, but this is such an incredibly important topic for us as daughters, as granddaughters, as nieces and sisters. We spend a lot of time going to senior centers. I do in my district. I believe, as my colleagues have mentioned tonight, one of the resounding themes of our seniors right now is they're afraid, they're concerned, they're worried. They don't know what the future's going to be because of all the rhetoric surrounding Washington.

The statistics that we've heard, a lot of them tonight, some of the ones that I've heard is that on top of more seniors living longer, we're going to have, the number of disabled elderly persons is projected to rise by one-third by 2030. As of January 1, 2011, each day 10,000, baby boomers turn 65. The numbers just aren't going to fit.

We've talked about the Republican plan to reform Medicare, to not touch those benefits of our present seniors, but to reform it for future seniors, for the baby boomers to come that are going to be turning 65 and going to have to rely on and need to rely on Medicare.

□ 1920

I'd like to talk about something in a personal way. We have a personal story, a lot of us. I'm in the sandwich generation. My parents are both in their eighties, and they're really having a pretty rough spell of bad health. And what it's done for my brother and sister and me, is we've had to spend—and we lovingly do this—but spend many, many hours trying to figure out how to meet their health care needs, try to figure out how to pay for all of their obligations and the worry of talking with doctors, trying to make sure they're comfortable.

This is a real worry for all families across the Nation. In our country, 66 percent of these caregivers are women, and I think that's why we, as women of the House, particularly Republican women of the House, wanted to discuss seniors and care. So, with this sandwich generation, with the rising incidence of Alzheimer's, which touches every family—and my family is no exception—it brings a different type of need to this country on how we're going to address these very difficult medical issues.

But if we don't address them—and we've heard this tonight—if we don't address them, if we just let them lie, let them stay the way they are, the way they are right now today, they will not be there. They cannot exist.

One of the ways I think that we can really help our seniors is to have an economic program in place to grow our economy so that their 401(k)s that they look at monthly, that they rely on for income, are growing rather than just dissipating and shrinking, which is another huge problem for our seniors. Many of our seniors planned very, very well for their retirement. They've kind of thought of them as their golden years, the times when they're going to be able to travel or visit more with their grandchildren and have the ease of life of the day-to-day obligations being met. And with the downturn in the economy, with the lack of growth in our economy, our seniors aren't able to do that. They put their heads on the pillow at night, and they're concerned about whether they're not only going to meet their obligations for their health care, but the gas, the food, and the payment for all of their needs.

We need to realize that we have plans. We have plans for our seniors. We know how important Social Security and Medicare are to our seniors. Maintaining it and making sure it's there for future generations is absolutely critical. I want to thank my colleague for inviting me here this evening and getting a chance to talk about something that I care deeply about, and that is our Nation's Greatest Generation.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, SHELLEY.

Tonight you have heard from a lot of us, Republican women here in Congress. You've heard our stories and our love and our respect for senior citizens, and our heartfelt desire and commitment to serve and to represent them and to make sure that their rights are protected and that their voice is heard here. You've heard how we have had proactive plans put forth here in the House from our group to address Medicare and to preserve and protect it for the future. You've heard how we care about Social Security, and we're not going to take it away. We want to make sure it is there for future generations.

You've heard of our concerns for Alzheimer's and the other diseases that are ravaging our aging population, and our desire and our commitment to move forward and make sure that those are addressed and that we make sure and find a cure there.

You've heard of how we are listening to the financial challenges that we are hearing from the seniors in our districts and the plans that we put forth to eliminate the estate tax so one generation can pass on their farm or their small business to another generation without the Federal Government taking the property or taking the farm. You've heard our commitment to veterans and to those who have sacrificed so much so that we can stay free. We're going to honor those commitments and those sacrifices.

Lastly, you've heard about our respect for this generation, and we know of their desire to pass on an America to their grandchildren that is just as great and just as promising as the one they grew up in. We are committed to making sure that we rein in our runaway federal spending here, we keep our fiscal house in order as a country, and that that promise is alive and well for their grandchildren. We are committed to moving forward as a group.

We thank you for listening, and we thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this time.

THE OCCUPY MOVEMENT: WE'D BETTER PAY ATTENTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BROOKS). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 5, 2011, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RUSH) is recognized for 30 minutes.

Mr. RUSH. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my outrage and my disappointment at

the Oakland, California, Police Department, which reacted with brutality to those peacefully protesting. Mr. Speaker, I want to remind our Nation's law enforcement authorities all across the land that civil disobedience is as American as American pie. It is the act through which our great Nation was conceived. It required great courage to do what they did at the Boston Tea Party. It required great courage for the great American, Henry David Thoreau, to refuse to go to war against Mexico in 1849, an act that gave birth to the anti-war movement that continues today.

The equalities that we as Americans enjoy today are the result of those great, courageous Americans that fought for our liberties, Mr. Speaker. The women's suffrage movement went from 1848 to 1920. Generations of courageous women marched, they fasted, and they were arrested. Finally, in 1920, the 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote. It took more than seven decades of civil disobedience to achieve the change that they sought.

Let's not forget, Mr. Speaker, that the abolition of slavery, the labor movement and the eradication of child labor, the civil rights movement, and the environmental movement all used civil disobedience as a powerful and peaceful weapon to change laws and to protect all of our liberties.

Members of the Occupy Movement now emerge as yet another generation of courageous Americans voicing a general frustration that many citizens feel: It was a money-driven elite that mismanaged the American economy. They are challenging us, this Congress, our government, to reform not only Wall Street but reform a culture of selfishness and greed that has distorted who we are and made the American Dream appear unattainable. We are losing ground as a result of these individuals, this grotesque, American, greedy and avaricious elite.

The Occupy Movement, Mr. Speaker, embodies a sense of growing disillusionment with the direction of our country. I, for one, understand that feeling. With deadlock a daily occurrence in this very House, it is hard for the American people not to feel a sense of utter frustration. They see their elected representatives unable to govern at this crucial time.

Mr. Speaker, a betrayal of American values occurred last night in Oakland, California, when police fired tear gas on those peaceful demonstrators. It occurred in New York City when police maced and beat protesters. Government violence against our own people? Is this not the very thing that we condemn in other places all around the world? How dare we denounce an action when committed abroad but yet remain silent when it happens in our own, very own—our own backyards.

□ 1930

I, for one, cannot remain silent. History teaches us that a violent response