

The Ryan budget, lauded by Republicans, would replace Medicare with an inefficient voucher plan and increase the out-of-pocket costs of Maryland seniors by more than \$6,800 in the first year alone. And while they charge the health reform bill cut Medicare, Republicans fail to admit that they adopted in their plan the same \$500 billion in "cuts"—actually cost savings—included in the health care reform law.

So I stand with my colleagues to assure seniors that we'll protect Medicare today and in the future. And to all of those seniors I visited this morning, Happy Valentine's Day.

SUGAR REFORM

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

Mr. PITTS. Mr. Speaker, today, on Valentine's Day, millions of Americans will celebrate with a box of chocolates or candy. All told, consumers are expected to spend more than \$1.5 billion on candy this holiday.

What they don't know is that government sugar controls are making that heart-shaped box more expensive than it needs to be. What they don't know is that American companies are struggling to compete against foreign producers who pay half as much for sugar.

Because of government price supports, marketing allotments, and import quotas, U.S. consumers and businesses pay almost double the average world market price for sugar. By some estimates, this could be costing us more than 20,000 jobs. Many of us have watched good jobs lost because the government guarantees the profits of a relatively small group of growers and producers.

Reforming our sugar program isn't a partisan issue, which is why I've been proud to introduce H.R. 1385, the Free Market Sugar Act, with my friend from Chicago, DANNY DAVIS.

Maybe next Valentine's Day can be sweeter for American workers and consumers.

CONTINUED ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE FOR OUR SENIORS

(Mr. CARSON of Indiana asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CARSON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, in 2010, the Affordable Care Act delivered a \$250 check to seniors in my district who were struggling to cover the gap between the cost of their prescription drugs and their Medicare coverage. In 2011, these same seniors benefited from an average savings of \$648 on their medications.

For my well-meaning Republican colleagues who say health reform is hurting Medicare beneficiaries, I ask them to imagine spending two and three times that amount on prescription drugs per month.

For most seniors, \$648 is a significant savings. And it is just the beginning.

The Affordable Care Act will provide more efficient care by bundling Medicare services, investing in our health care workforce, and focusing on quality.

Replacing Medicare with vouchers would erase the progress we have already made toward prescription drug coverage and lead to fewer choices for beneficiaries.

I encourage my colleagues to work with me on solutions that guarantee continued access to health care for our seniors.

CELEBRATING THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE HOMECOMING OF CONGRESSMAN SAM JOHNSON

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

Mr. BURGESS. Mr. Speaker, today I want to acknowledge a colleague, a fellow Texan, a veteran, and a true American hero. Congressman SAM JOHNSON served in the United States Air Force for 29 years. During service, he flew in 62 combat missions in the Korean war and 25 missions in the Vietnam war. While flying in his 25th Vietnam combat mission, Congressman JOHNSON was shot down and captured in North Vietnam.

On February 12, 1973, after 7 years of imprisonment, Congressman JOHNSON was returned to the United States and reunited with his wife and daughters. This week, we honor Congressman JOHNSON and we celebrate the 39th anniversary of his homecoming. Through the years of agony, he persevered, and he left Vietnam with the resolution to support every man and every woman fighting for the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, we are all called to office for different reasons. For Members of my class 10 years ago, it was the tragic events of September 11. For Congressman JOHNSON, it was his imprisonment that empowered him to run for office.

It is an honor to celebrate a man who has given not only part of his life to protect our freedoms, but a man who continues to represent the American people with dignity and respect. Thank you, Congressman JOHNSON, for your service to our Nation.

COMMENDING THE PRESIDENT'S PLAN TO HELP RESPONSIBLE HOMEOWNERS REFINANCE THEIR HOMES

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

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, the housing crisis plunged our economy into a recession that we are still struggling to overcome. Homeownership is at the heart of the American Dream, and yet over 10 million American families now owe more on their home than

what it's worth. President Obama recently announced a plan that would give homeowners the chance to save hundreds monthly and approximately \$3,000 yearly on their mortgages by refinancing at historically low interest rates.

Under President Obama's plan, the administration would also expand the eligibility for the Home Affordable Modification Program to borrowers with higher debt loads. It would also triple incentives paid to banks to reduce principal on loans and to help borrowers rebuild equity. In addition to these proposals, the administration is also extending HAMP to December 2013 to help responsible homeowners lower their costs and stay in their homes.

Mr. Speaker, I thank President Obama for his proposal that will provide much-needed relief for millions of American families. And I thank the President for his leadership and his commitment to helping American families move forward.

CAMERAS IN THE SUPREME COURT

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

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court will soon take up the President's nationalized health care law. This case will go down in history as it affects every American. But unless every citizen has a seat inside the Supreme Court, they will not be able to watch the legal arguments or hear the questions by the Justices. The people will not be able to see justice in action. The American public should be able to view the proceedings on TV much like they do with C-SPAN when Congress is in session.

I know cameras can be placed in a courtroom without disruption because I was one of the first judges in Texas to allow an unobtrusive camera in the courtroom. I did so without any problem and proved the cynics wrong.

A lack of seating capacity is no reason to deny the American public access to the Supreme Court. The American people deserve an all-access pass to watch the High Court in action. The Supreme Court is the most important court in the world. Let the world know what takes place behind those closed doors. Let cameras and the people in.

And that's just the way it is.

MEDICARE ADVANTAGE

(Ms. BUERKLE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. BUERKLE. Mr. Speaker, the President assured American seniors that under his health care package, their insurance plans would not be affected and that they would have the same health care choices as before the law.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, this is not the case. The President's health care law

makes drastic cuts to the popular Medicare Advantage program of more than \$136 billion. With these cuts, Mr. Speaker, Medicare Advantage plans will be forced to make significant adjustments, including reductions in what they cover. Those reductions will limit seniors' ability to choose the Medicare plan that best suits them.

It is important to note, Mr. Speaker, that the cuts will hit low-income seniors and the disabled with disproportionate cuts. About 70 percent of the cuts will be imposed on those with incomes below \$32,400 per year.

The President's cuts will give the 120,000 seniors in my district who choose Medicare Advantage few choices and increased costs. Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to work with me to protect Medicare Advantage.

MEDICARE

(Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. McMORRIS RODGERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to address the question that is on the minds of every senior in America, and that question is, what is the future of Medicare? And what is this Congress doing to protect it?

The President's budget, which was released just yesterday, fails to address the inevitable bankruptcy this program faces. His budget includes a record budget deficit. His budget also includes over \$2 trillion in tax increases that will not only destroy jobs but do nothing to protect the future of Medicare. We know that ObamaCare cut \$500 billion out of Medicare. And now the President in his budget is asking for more than \$360 billion in additional cuts.

The President's health care bill is destroying a program that was designed to protect seniors. It's limiting access, increasing costs, and lowering quality care. According to the American Medical Association, one out of three doctors already limits the number of Medicare patients they see. Just try to find a doctor in eastern Washington who will take a new Medicare patient. This is unacceptable. We can do better, and we must do better.

MEDICARE ADVANTAGE

(Ms. FOXX asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that our colleagues across the aisle are doing their best to hide the truth about the cuts to Medicare that came with ObamaCare and those that the President has recommended in his budget. However, the truth will out.

The President's health care takeover, like his latest budget, is bad for our Nation's seniors. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the Demo-

crats' health care and tax increase law slashed funding for Medicare Advantage plans used by millions of seniors across the country.

According to an October Forbes article, the average beneficiary—considering both those who stay in the stripped-down Medicare Advantage program and those who transition out of it—will incur an average cut of more than \$3,700 in benefits per year by 2017.

That will directly affect the 40,000 seniors in my mostly rural North Carolina district who enjoy Medicare Advantage plans. So much for the President's promise that "if you like your plan, you can keep it."

That's just another reason why I voted against the health care law and intend to support its repeal.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 14, 2012.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
The Speaker, U.S. Capitol, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, the Clerk received the following message from the Secretary of the Senate on February 14, 2012 at 10:25 a.m.:

That the Senate passed without amendment H.R. 1162.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS,
Clerk.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE CLERK OF THE HOUSE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Clerk of the House of Representatives:

OFFICE OF THE CLERK,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, DC, February 13, 2011.

Hon. JOHN A. BOEHNER,
The Speaker, The Capitol, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. SPEAKER: Pursuant to the permission granted in Clause 2(h) of Rule II of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives, I have the honor to transmit a sealed envelope received from the White House on February 13, 2012, at 2:14 p.m., and said to contain a message from the President whereby he submits his Budget of the United States Government for Fiscal Year 2013.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

KAREN L. HAAS,
Clerk of the House.

BUDGET OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013—MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES (H. DOC. NO. 112-78)

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following message

from the President of the United States; which was read and, together with the accompanying papers, referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed:

To the Congress of the United States:

America was built on the idea that anyone who is willing to work hard and play by the rules, can make it if they try—no matter where they started out. By giving every American a fair shot, asking everyone to do their fair share, and ensuring that everyone played by the same rules, we built the great American middle class and made our country a model for the world.

Today, America is still home to the world's best universities, most productive workers, and most innovative companies. But for many Americans, the basic bargain at the heart of the American Dream has eroded.

Long before this recession hit, there was a widespread feeling that hard work had stopped paying off; that fewer and fewer of those who contributed to the success of our economy actually benefited from that success. Those at the very top grew wealthier while everyone else struggled with paychecks that did not keep up with the rising cost of everything from college tuition to groceries. And as a result, too many families found themselves taking on more and more debt just to keep up—often papered over by mounting credit card bills and home equity loans.

Then, in the middle of 2008, the house of cards collapsed. Too many mortgages had been sold to people who could not afford—or even understand—them. Banks had packaged too many risky loans into securities and then sold them to investors who were misled or misinformed about the risks involved. Huge bets had been made and huge bonuses had been paid out with other people's money. And the regulators who were supposed to prevent this crisis either looked the other way or did not have the authority to act.

In the end, this growing debt and irresponsibility helped trigger the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. Combined with new tax cuts and new mandatory programs that had never been paid for, it threw our country into a deep fiscal hole. And millions of hardworking Americans lost their jobs, their homes, and their basic economic security.

Today, we are seeing signs that our economy is on the mend. But we are not out of the woods yet. Instead, we are facing a make-or-break moment for the middle class, and for all those who are fighting to get there. What is at stake is whether or not this will be a country where working people can earn enough to raise a family, build modest savings, own a home, and secure their retirement. This is the defining issue of our time.

This Budget reflects my deep belief that we must rise to meet this moment—both for our economy and for the millions of Americans who have worked so hard to get ahead.