

care reform, because they knew that it was strengthening Medicare and making Medicare more viable for the future and expanding benefits for seniors and the disabled that are covered by Medicare.

This is part of the historic nature of the Democrats and Medicare. We started Medicare. We strengthened Medicare. We have done everything we can to make Medicare more secure as a guaranteed Federal program. Republicans opposed Medicare from the beginning, continue to try to either repeal it, or, in the words of Speaker Gingrich, make it wither on the vine. And now in the latest proposal, the Republican budget here in the House of Representatives, my very Republican colleagues that spoke tonight all voted for the Republican budget that would essentially get rid of Medicare, make it into a voucher, not provide the Federal guarantee, and make it so the seniors were essentially thrown out with a voucher or a certain amount of money and had to go out and buy private health insurance, which they'll never find.

So I had to come to the floor tonight, Mr. Speaker, and really tell the truth about the parties and where they stand on Medicare. The fact of the matter is that the Democrats started the Medicare program and continue to make it viable.

I yield back the balance of my time.

IN RECOGNITION OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

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

Mr. WEST. Mr. Speaker, in commemoration of Black History Month, I rise to acknowledge the Republican Party's proud and storied history of standing up for the rights of African Americans.

The first black Members of Congress served during Reconstruction, and they were all Republicans. They won their seats, despite fierce threats of violence against black voters by groups like the Ku Klux Klan, and were successful only as a result of the firm support they received from the Republican Party.

One of these Members was Josiah T. Walls, a slave who earned his freedom through service to the Union in the Civil War. He settled in Alachua County, in our sunny State of Florida, and was repeatedly elected to Congress at large.

In some ways, Mr. Speaker, I carry the torch of Josiah Walls. You see, in 1876, the Democrats contested his election and had him replaced midterm with one of their own. No black Republican would again be elected from Florida to this House until November 2, 2010, when the voters of that State entrusted me to be their Representative.

On my desk in my office, there is a book called "Capitol Men," and it is a

biography of those first black Members of Congress. I stand where Josiah Walls and the other early black Republican Members of Congress once stood—Hiram Revels of Mississippi; Benjamin Turner of Alabama; Jefferson Long of Georgia; Robert DeLarge, Robert Brown Elliott, and Joseph Rainey, all of South Carolina. They were the ones who carried that first torch for my colleague, TIM SCOTT.

□ 2010

They would have stood here urging support for policies of equal opportunity for all. Mr. Speaker, I stand here this evening to recognize their legacy.

The Republican Party has always been the party of freedom. Today, we understand that our principles are best served when we act as stalwart advocates of free markets. But historically, Republicans understood that the value of every human life is diminished when any human life is made to work against its will.

Free markets are characterized by the free exchange of goods and services—and by the free exchange of labor for compensation. You see, Mr. Speaker, without free people, there can be no free markets.

Where men are not free, freedom does not reign. And so the Republicans have always been the party of free men, of individual freedom. It was President Abraham Lincoln, the father of the Grand Old Party, who signed the Emancipation Proclamation and brought about the freeing of the slaves. For many, this is the beginning and the end of the Republican Party's role in advancing equal rights. But that understanding misses the myriad ways our party went on to better the lives of Black Americans and cheapens the many contributions that later generations of Republicans made to the cause of freedom.

It was, in fact, Republicans of their day who worked to pass the 13th, the 14th, and the 15th Amendments, securing for African Americans deliverance from slavery, equal protection under the law, and the right to vote.

Each of these accomplishments did its part to cement the fundamental freedoms all Americans enjoy today. None of them could have gotten off the ground without GOP support. Take the 13th amendment, for example. At Abraham Lincoln's request, the Republican National Committee Chairman Edwin Morgan made abolishing slavery an official part of the party's platform in 1864. At that year's national convention, he opened with a statement on the topic. He said:

The party of which you, gentlemen, are the delegated and honored representatives, will fall far short of accomplishing its great mission unless among its other resolves it shall declare for such an amendment of the Constitution as will positively prohibit African slavery in the United States.

The 14th Amendment was no different. A little known fact about that

law that granted Black Americans citizenship, with all the rights and privileges thereof, is that every vote in favor was cast by a Republican and every vote against was cast by a Democrat.

In 1968, when the Democrat-controlled legislature of New Jersey voted to rescind its ratification of the 14th Amendment, it was the State's Republican Governor who vetoed that attempt.

Mr. Speaker, it was the Republican-controlled 39th Congress that established the Buffalo Soldiers, a fighting force of six regiments of Black American troops. They would soon become known for exhibiting the "courage of a cornered buffalo" in battle while posted to the frontier. In peacetime, they gained renown for being the finest horsemen the Army had to offer. And in 1907, the 10th Cavalry Regiment of Buffalo Soldiers was sent to the United States Military Academy at West Point to teach the cadets riding skills and mounted drill.

Mr. Speaker, think about that for a second: the commanders of their day were so confident in the ability of the Buffalo Soldiers that they entrusted them with the training of the next generation of Army leaders. And it was the Republicans who made that happen.

It was the Republicans who passed the 15th Amendment, as well. For once, the story is true that not every Republican supported it. A few abstained, saying the measure did not go far enough. It was the Democrats who voted against the 15th Amendment, and when it passed anyway, it was the Democrats who resorted to the use of poll taxes, literacy tests, intimidation and other pernicious practices in an effort to keep Black Americans from exercising their right to vote. This was something that my grandparents and my parents experienced growing up in south Georgia.

It was a Republican by the name of Senator Charles Sumner who got the equal rights movement on its feet. A fierce abolitionist and leader of the "Radical Republicans"—sounds very familiar when they start talking about Tea Party Republicans—Senator Sumner wrote and shepherded the first ever civil rights bill through Congress. It was a Republican President, the great General Ulysses S. Grant, who signed it into law the same day that it passed. And that comprehensive bill, the Civil Rights Act of 1875, would become the blueprint for every subsequent piece of civil rights legislation to come before Congress despite the fact that it was struck down by a backward-looking court.

It was the Republicans who first called for racial justice in the Armed Forces, not only allowing Black Americans to serve their country, but welcoming them to serve their country alongside their white brothers.

It was a Republican judge named Elbert Tuttle who time and again ruled in favor of civil rights and who went on

to order the University of Mississippi to admit its first ever Black college student. It was a Republican Supreme Court Justice who authored the decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* that recognized racial segregation for what it was: a violation of the United States Constitution.

And when a school district in Arkansas refused to integrate, it was a Republican President, Dwight David Eisenhower, who sent in the 101st Airborne Division to escort the Little Rock Nine to class. However, it was a Democrat Governor in Orval Faubus, you may recall, who had tried to use his National Guardsmen to prevent them from enrolling.

Mr. Speaker, Republicans were unfazed by the many Democrats, including John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson, who criticized President Eisenhower's decision. Meanwhile, it was the Democrats in the Senate who filibustered the first civil rights act of the 20th century and the Republicans who managed to pass it nonetheless.

The law established a Civil Rights Division within the Justice Department and authorized the Attorney General to request injunctions against anyone attempting to deny a person's right to vote. It was written at the behest of President Eisenhower after a long drought of civil rights bills under Presidents Franklin Delano Roosevelt and President Harry Truman.

It was a Senate minority leader, Everett Dirksen, a Republican, who helped write the first Civil Rights Act of 1964, widely regarded as the most influential of them all. And in recent years, it's been the Republican Party that has fought to prevent African Americans from being trapped in a permanent underclass through dependence on government handouts.

In the 1990s, it was the Republican-controlled 104th Congress that passed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act. Then-Democrat President Bill Clinton signed it only after reluctantly having vetoed it twice.

This reform changed the face of welfare, ensuring that recipients who were able to work would be required to seek employment. No longer would government checks be seen as an entitlement. No longer would States have a financial incentive to add as many names to their welfare rolls as possible. Finally, there was an alternative to the cycle of poverty caused by years of misguided Democrat policy. And it's been Republicans who have continued to fight for the underprivileged communities, even as we're painted as the party of the white upper class.

In 2004, another Republican-controlled Congress under the leadership of Republican President George W. Bush signed an omnibus bill that included a voucher program for school children right here in the District of Columbia. Instead of being shackled to the failed public school system, thousands of students were able to use the

first Federal Government vouchers to escape high-performing private schools.

□ 2020

Mr. Speaker, what Republicans have long understood is that poor communities are best served when they're empowered to care for themselves. The more they come to rely on government checks, the less they learn to rely on their own ability and ingenuity.

Our party firmly believes in the safety net. We reject the idea of the safety net becoming a hammock. For this reason, the Republican value of minimizing government dependence is particularly beneficial to the poorest among us. Conversely, the Democratic appetite for ever-increasing redistributionary handouts is in fact the most insidious form of slavery remaining in the world today and does not promote economic freedom.

Time after time, the GOP has stood strong as leaders on issues of conscience. Even when the positions we've taken have been unpopular, we've held the line and ultimately brought about liberty and justice for all. From eliminating slavery, to securing full citizenship and voting rights for African Americans, to calling for desegregation even in the most hostile bastions of the Deep South, to implementing school choice in poor communities, to helping black families break out of the cycle of welfare dependence, Mr. Speaker, Republicans have been on the front lines of the fight for equal rights and individual manifest destiny since our party's founding under Lincoln.

So, too, has the party led on issues like reducing the size of government, streamlining the Federal bureaucracy, and returning power to the States. These positions didn't always garner the most popular support at the time. It's easier to convince a person that a government should be doing something for them it currently isn't than to convince a person the government shouldn't be doing something for them it currently is.

But real visionary leaders don't retreat from fights. It is said that one evening, as George Washington sat at his table after dinner, the fire behind him flared up, leading him to move his chair away so as not to end up getting burned. When someone called George Washington out, saying a general ought to be able to stand the fire, he responded that no general should ever be taking fire from behind.

That is the essence of integrity and conviction—the willingness to stand for what you believe at all times, alone if need be, without the option of retreat, no matter how tough the slog ahead may be, and to do so with the faith that eventually it is possible to transform a losing fight into a winning one.

For inspiration, we need only to look to the former slave and Republican, Frederick Douglass. Having found his way to freedom through education and

hard work, he could have been forgiven for retiring from the public eye, but he didn't back down from the work still to be done. Instead, he made himself one of the most stalwart champions of not just the antislavery movement, but the women's rights movement as well. He wasn't content to lend his political capital to causes that would benefit him. He knew what we know, that injustice anywhere is an affront to the human spirit.

To free African Americans from the bonds of slavery was only the first step for Frederick Douglass, and he would not be satisfied until he helped liberate women from the bonds of misogyny as well. In those days, Douglass could count on the Republican Party to be his ally in the fight. Today, we remain no less dedicated to the cause of freedom.

So therefore, Mr. Speaker, with a core belief in the supremacy and the sovereignty of the individual and the unconditional dignity of every human life, the Republican Party is, always has been, and forever shall be the party of equality of opportunity.

Happy Black History Month.

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

HEALTH CARE REFORM

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

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, it is such an honor to serve with such an honorable man as Colonel ALLEN WEST. I've known him for a few years, going back to his previous efforts at election to the House of Representatives. I'm just delighted that he is here. I'm delighted to call him a friend. He has been a fantastic addition here to the House of Representatives.

I would like to address something a Democratic colleague had referenced, and that was with regard to Medicare. My friend was taking issue with what my Republican doctors were addressing here on the floor with regard to Medicare. And it was interesting to hear a Democrat say that actually ObamaCare strengthened Medicare. It's interesting. I guess the definition of "is" means something to some folks. In this case, I guess the definition of "strengthen" would have to be what was at issue here.

The Democrats strengthened Medicare, cut \$500 billion—with a B—out of Medicare, and are proud to report to the American people that they strengthened Medicare. Well, in a bill I didn't agree with, the debt ceiling bill, it's cutting hundreds of billions of dollars from our national security, for our national defense. I guess the same reasoning would say we're cutting hundreds of billions of dollars from our national defense. And under the Democratic strategy and definition, I guess, of "strengthen," could say, under that