of my colleagues to support fiscal responsibility. I ask all of my colleagues to support the Allard rule.

□ 1615

MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DIAZ-BALART). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. GIBBONS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, for those who are watching C–SPAN, they have been already treated to a part of the debate on Medicare and Medicaid. Why do we continue to harp on this subject?

I want to first of all say that I have been on the Medicare program for 10 years. I have paid my payments and paid my dues in that program, and my wife has been on the program for about that time, too. But even more importantly, I was here in the Congress when we created Medicare.

For the last 27 years, I have been on the Medicare committee, the Committee on Ways and Means. During all that time, I have taken a deep interest in the program and have helped nurture it. So I know what I am talking about.

The Republicans, though, have seized upon some reason for giving a great tax cut to their wealthy friends, and the only place they can get the money is out of the Medicare and Medicaid program.

Now, the Republicans are going to take, within a matter of 2 weeks, from Medicare and Medicaid recipients a total of $489 billion out of those two programs. Let me repeat that: $489 billion, almost a trillion dollars, half a trillion dollars out of those programs.

And most of that will end up in the pockets of their wealthy friends.

The Medicare and Medicaid programs are powerfully complex, in benefits as well as in structure. The Medicare program is not broke. That is the first thing that we must understand. The Medicare program was set up as a pay-as-you-go program when I was in Congress here. And it has been that way ever since.

We always thought if we could keep a year ahead of the bills, then the program would be lucky. Now we are 7 years ahead of the bills in the program, and the Republicans are wringing their hands, so that they can get enough money out of that program, those programs to pay for their tax cuts for their wealthy friends.

The Medicare program covers not only benefits for elderly people, medical care benefits, but it covers all of the disabled in the United States. It covers all of the medical education in the United States. It covers all of the kidney dialysis for the kidney failure patients in the United States, regardless of age. It covers all of the help for rural hospitals and urban hospitals that must take care of a great many very poor people. So it is a very complex and a very extensive program.

Most of the nursing home care in the United States is paid for out of the Medicaid program, a part of that $479 billion of cuts. Those people are going to be dumped either back on their families or back on the community because they are there, and they will be there; perhaps no hope for ever curing them. And that is the size and the tragedy of the whole thing we are talking about.

The Medicare program has been changed over the years in order that we could pay the bills from year to year. We will continue to do that regardless of the outcome of this Republican proposal to take so much money out of the program to give for a tax cut for their wealthy friends.

What we are really complaining about is that no one has seen their plan. I have held up for a lot of people a copy of their plan. As we all can plainly see, it is just a blank piece of paper.

On the day we start to debate this plan in the Congress, I will bring in the plan and let us see it from this same podium. It will be 500, 600, 700, maybe 1,000 pages long. And who will understand what is in that plan we have been promised for months? We have seen nothing. We have been promised a plan as of this afternoon, and we got nothing. We have been promised that we would start voting on that next Monday, but now they have moved it until Wednesday a week.

I hope we see the plan before Wednesday a week, because the American public needs to understand what the plan is and how it works and what it will cost them in further out-of-pocket expenditures or cuts in benefits or both.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind all Members that remarks in debate must be addressed to the Chair and should not be directed to a viewing audience.

MEDICARE CHANGES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from West Virginia [Mr. WISE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WISE. Mr. Speaker, while I am going to speak on corridor H and its importance to West Virginia, I just want to touch for a second on Medicare because today the Speaker of the House and the majority leader of the Senate unveiled what the Medicare plan was, and what we see is a stealth health bill.

They did not give us the details. We do not know much more than what we have known before. We know that they want to cut $270 billion over the next 7 years. That has been out there for a long time. We know there are a variety of ways they want to do it, except they do not spell the details out. We do know this. While the Speaker says that it will cost only $7 a month more in premiums to seniors, it is actually going to be, according to the White House, according to other credible officials, $20 or $30 a month more.

We also know this, Mr. Speaker. We know that $270 billion is 2½ times what it necessary by the estimate of the trustees of the Medicare plan to make it solvent.

Mr. Speaker, stealth health is not a good idea, particularly when rewriting 30 years of Medicare in a 2-week period. Americans must demand to see the plan.

CORRIDOR H

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to corridor H, because this week in our State there are going to be those gathering to discuss the environmental aspects of corridor H and, yes, to attack it. I regret that. Because I do not think that there has been one highway that is more important to West Virginia. I do not think there has been one highway that has been more discussed, reviewed, analyzed than corridor H has been.

In a previous speech on this floor, I discussed why corridor H is a national highway. Let me now discuss the environmental aspects. All those in West Virginia, and many of those from outside West Virginia who have recently driven between Elkins and Buckhannon have marveled at that four-lane strip. They remember how long that drive was before, not only in time and distance but also in just being arduous. They also say, what an incredible piece of road.

Mr. Speaker, that is what we are talking about doing now, from Elkins to the Virginia State line, if people would just let us, if people would get off our backs and let us move this road forward.

Yes, I was involved in the Elkins to Buckhannon segment, particularly when it looked like environmental concerns might either delay it several years or possibly threaten it altogether. And working with a number of agencies, we were able to pull them together. We were able to get the wetlands question dealt with. We were able to deal with the acid-mine drainage. We were able to deal with stream crossings. We were able to safeguard habitat.

I am happy to say that we were able to mitigate wetlands in an innovative way. If we can do it in that rough section of corridor H, surely we can do it for the rest of corridor H as well.

I think it is important to note that the original plan for corridor H was to be a southern route through our State. This was back in the 1970's. The highway department and others recognized that we could not do that under present-day standards. So back in the 1980's, we went forward to look at other options and adopted a northern route for corridor H. I might point out that some environmental organizers at the time said: If you just go the northern route, that is fine with us; we just think it ought not to be in the southern route. Well, they got their wish. Now, yet some want to contest this.

This project has been to EPA. It has been to Fish and Wildlife. I cannot name the alphabet soup of Federal agencies this project has been to. And so I would just say, the importance of corridor H, let me talk about stream crossings, for instance.

□ 1630

To avoid contaminating streams with piers supporting the highway, the State has agreed to place beams outside the streams that span the waterway. The State will develop an erosion-control process and methods to seal off acid-bearing strata. The State is going to take unprecedented action to purchase extra land and right-of-way to accommodate the environmental concerns. The State will reclaim the slopes with indigenous plant life, not just grass.

The State also, in terms of excess earth-work disposal, the State is not going to leave this up to the contractors, but in the case of corridor H will decide a detailed cleanup and disposal in the contract for each specific site.

There are going to be those gathering this weekend in West Virginia to attack corridor H again. Incidentally, I find it interesting that much of the attack on corridor H comes from outside of the State, not inside the State. I invite them to visit very many of our counties, where I am confident that 65 to 75 percent of our population strongly supports corridor H. As they gather in West Virginia, and we welcome them, of course, I urge them to drive the Elkins to Buckhannon segment to see what can be done. If they want to go further, they can go from Buckhannon to Weston, and understand the true economic significance of corridor H as well. Drive the Buckhannon to Elkins segment and see what has been accomplished, see what we have been able, working together, to achieve; experience what corridor H is bringing to central West Virginia. That is the environment that we all love. That is the environment we all want to safeguard. Corridor H can continue that process.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. DIAZ-BALART). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. FRANK] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kentucky [Mr. WARD] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. WARD addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio [Ms. KAPTUR] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. KAPTUR addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

THE GUAM COMMONWEALTH ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Guam [Mr. UNDERWOOD] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, This afternoon I want to address the current situation regarding our effort to advance the cause of a new political status for Guam as envisioned in the Guam Commonwealth Act, H.R. 1056. I introduced H.R. 1056 on February 24, 1995, as my first bill of the 104th Congress.

The Guam Commission on Self-Determination, a bipartisan commission of Government of Guam officials and citizen participants, is currently in discussions with the Clinton administration to resolve specific areas of disagreement on the specifics of the draft Guam Commonwealth Act. These discussions have been on hold for some time because of the resignation of the administration's Special Representative for Guam Commonwealth, Mr. I. Michael Heyman, earlier this year. After several months spent searching for a replacement for Mr. Heyman, the administration has appointed a very capable individual to complete the task at hand, Mr. Stanley Roth, an Assistant to the President and the Senior Director of Asian Affairs in the National Security Council. We are pleased with the selection of Mr. Roth, and we believe that he has the necessary understanding of Guam's issues and the skill to build on the progress that has been achieved by Mr. Heyman in the past year.

The Guam Commonwealth Act, H.R. 1056, would redefine the way the Federal Government relates to Guam, and would give Guam the tools we need to succeed in the next century. Guam has a robust economy fueled by its visitor industry. This year Guam expects to attract over 1.3 million visitors. Guam is relatively self-sufficient, and Guam is not seeking a new Commonwealth to get new Federal money—instead, Guam is a success story of the insular territories, and Guam's drive for a new status is motivated by a partnership that is good for America and good for Guam.

As America's westernmost soil, 10,000 miles and 15 time zones away, Guam is America's front door to Asian trade. Guam is often thought of as being strategically important to the United States in military terms. But Guam is also strategically important in projecting American influence and American democracy in our part of the world.

The new majority in Congress has undertaken to reshape the Federal relationship with the States, and has given national attention to this issue. However, there has not been very much thought given to how the new federalism would affect the insular territories. It is not an automatic assumption to say that power that is divested from the Federal Government would be given to the territories in the same way that it is given to the States. We have already seen examples in legislation affecting the territories where the empowerment of the States has not translated into an empowerment of the territories. I would point out, just as many conservative leaders have pointed out, that the 10th amendment restricts the power of the Federal Government, and reserves those powers not granted to the Federal Government to the States and the people. It may surprise some to learn that the 10th amendment does not apply to the territories. While we are not States, we are still people. But, all constitutional protections afforded to any American in any State are also afforded to the Americans in the territories.

Guam's Commonwealth Act challenges this Congress to look at the Federal relationship in this era, and offers a new relationship within our constitutional framework. We have proposed a framework that gives Guam stake in the Federal system. We have proposed a framework that is based on the American concept that power drives from the consent of the governed. And we have proposed a framework that unleashes the economic potential of Guam within the American system.

I hope that this Congress would deal with these issues in a serious and forthright manner, and that we can begin the process of shaping the new Commonwealth for Guam early in the next session. I look forward to the weeks and months ahead and to our work with Mr. Roth and the Guam Commission on Self-Determination. The Chairman of the Guam Commission, Governor Gutierrez, has signaled his eagerness to get on with the business of completing the Commonwealth discussions and bringing this issue to closure. Working together with Guam and the Federal Government, I have every confidence that the aspirations of the people of Guam for a new Commonwealth can be fulfilled.

I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 1056, the Guam Commonwealth Act, and I challenge this Congress to find a role for the Americans in the territories as they redefine a new federalism.

LEGISLATION RESTRICTING FIRST AMENDMENT RIGHTS FOR ALL AMERICANS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Colorado [Mr. SKAGGS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SKAGGS. Mr. Speaker, on August 4 the majority party passed a provision in the Labor-HHS appropriations bill sponsored by the gentleman from