HELP SAVE MEDICARE

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

Mr. HERGER. Mr. Speaker, Democrats have been playing a broken record for the last few months. It goes something like this: ''Medicare is not really going bankrupt—Republicans only want to give a tax break to the rich.''

What unmitigated drivel. I've heard a lot of tall stories in my time, but this takes the prize. It is true that Republicans advocate tax cuts. But the vast overwhelming majority of those tax cuts go to middle-income working American families. One of those tax cuts is the $500-per-child tax credit for almost every child in America.

Now, let me ask a question: Are there more millionaires in this country, or working families with children?

The most important point to realize here is that tax cuts have nothing to do with Medicare. Even if the budget was balanced and rich people were taxed 100 percent of their income, Medicare would still go broke in 7 years.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats need to fix their broken record and begin helping Republicans save Medicare.

WHY CUT $270 BILLION FROM MEDICARE?

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

Mr. STUPAK. Mr. Speaker, there are philosophical differences between Democrats and Republicans on Medicare, and there is no doubt that the Republican party would like $270 billion in tax cuts, but why $270 billion in tax cuts in the Medicare program? To pay for the tax breaks for the wealthiest 1.1 percent of all Americans and for tax breaks for corporations.

□ 1045

I sit on the Subcommittee on Health and Environment of the Committee on Commerce. As of October 10 we will begin the Medicare markup. We have never yet seen a bill. We have a 59-page summary. In that summary that we have read from cover to cover, nowhere, nowhere does it say that $270 billion will go and be reinvested into Medicare. Nowhere does it say that.

If they wanted to save Medicare, take the $270 billion in tax cuts and put it back into the Medicare system. What is going to happen, Mr. Speaker, is just what the U.S. News & World Report says: Tax exempt. You pay Uncle Sam.

How come thousands of American corporations do not? Because they are going to take the $270 billion in tax cuts out of Medicare and give it to the corporations.

CONTACT REPRESENTATIVES DIRECTLY

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

Mr. EHLERS. Mr. Speaker, recently I received a letter from a senior citizen in my district, Mrs. Esther Koster, who responded to a letter I had sent her. She responded as follows:

DEAR SIR: It was refreshing to get a letter from a Congressman with information without having to sign a petition and send money. For the past month I have received a minimum of three letters a day from different organizations asking me to sign petitions and send money. At first I complied but lately it has gotten out of hand and now those letters go from the mailbox to the garbage without being opened. Are all these organizations necessary and how can I tell if some are using the funds for themselves or for other purposes?

Mr. Speaker, last month I gave a speech on this floor decrying the fraudulent organizations which are soliciting money from senior citizens, ostensibly to let us know their opinion. Mrs. Koster, I want to assure you, you do not have to send money to these organizations to let us know what you think. Spend 32 cents for a stamp to send us a letter, as you did. To all senior citizens out there, avoid these fraudulent organizations. Contact your Congressperson directly.

PEOPLE WANT THE LETTER OF THE LAW

(Mrs. SCHROEDER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute, to revise and extend her remarks, and to include therein extraneous material.)

Mrs. SCHROEDER. Mr. Speaker, as an American, I feel very good about the fact that everybody is under the letter of the law. As a Member of this body during Watergate, I was very saddened by the fact that the Presidency was being attacked, but I also felt very good that we were showing the world that no one is above the letter of the law in this great and wonderful country, thanks to Thomas Jefferson and many of our forefathers and the rules they put together.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I felt sick because I found an article in the Hartford Courant in which the ethics charges against the Speaker were being discussed by the chairwoman of the Ethics Committee who said, the letter of the law is not compelling to me, that there is a lot of flexibility in our rules, and I wanted to put together a process that will make Members feel good.

I do not think people want that flexibility. I think they want the letter of the law.

Mr. Speaker, I include for the RECORD the article to which I referred.

JOHNSON DEFENDS ETHICS CASE STANCE

(By John A. MacDonald)

WASHINGTON.—Rep. Nancy L. Johnson, R-6th District, confirmed Tuesday that she signed a 1988 letter to the House ethics committee urging if to conduct a ''full inquiry'' into complaints against then Speaker Jim Wright, a Texas Democrat.

The letter was a circulated by Rep. Newt Gingrich, who at the time was a relatively unknown Republican from Georgia. Now, he is speaker of the House and is the subject of complaints under review by the ethics committee.

Johnson became the committee's chairwoman when Republicans took control of the House in January.

In addition to the letter, Gingrich issued a press release may 26, 1988, in which he said it was ''vital'' for the committee to hire an outside counsel to pursue the complaints against Wright throughly.

The letter and press release are significant because many think they set a standard the committee has failed to meet in its Gingrich investigation.

Asked why that was not happening, Johnson said, ''This is Newt speaking, and you see some of our Democratic colleagues agree with him. . . . In signing this original letter, that didn't mean I agreed with him on all this stuff.''

Johnson's comments came during a wide-ranging meeting with Connecticut reporters.

The committee is considering complaints relating to a book deal Gingrich signed with media magnate Rupert Murdoch, the financing and promotion of a college course Gingrich taught in Georgia and whether the speaker allowed an outside consultant to perform official House business.

Johnson also defended the committee's decision not to use an investigative procedure set out in the House Ethics Manual.

''The letter of the law is not compelling to me,'' she said. ''I will work with our rules. Our rules have a certain amount of flexibility. . . . My goal is to have a process that the committee members feel good about.''

Rep. Jim McDermott of Washington, the senior committee Democrat, has objected to the course the committee is following, complaining that the panel was not prepared to question key witnesses who appeared in July. Tuesday, Johnson complained that McDermott had not raised his concerns with the committee before making them public.

McDermott did not respond to a request for comment.

As she has in the past, Johnson held out the possibility that the committee will turn for help to an outside counsel, as many House Democrats and several government watchdog groups have requested. But she said the 10-member panel, evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats, had not reached that point.

Responding to reports the panel was close to appointing an outside counsel, Johnson said, ''It is absolutely true, without doubt in my mind, that the committee has made no decision.''

Johnson sought to portray the committee as struggling to find the best way to achieve a consensus on how to complete its inquiry. ''Jim's position is certainly legitimate,'' she said, referring to McDermott.

But, she went on, ''Six-four decisions aren't healthy. They don't get you anywhere, particularly 6–4 procedural decisions. Six-four procedural decisions tend to set up 5–5 deadlocks.'' A 6–4 vote is the narrowest majority by which the 10-member committee can approve an action.

The letter Johnson and 70 other House Republicans signed in 1988 has been circulated in recent days by groups seeking an outside counsel with unlimited authority. It concluded: ''The integrity of the House of Representatives and the trust of the American people require a full inquiry [into the Wright complaints].''

Johnson said Tuesday, ''I don't see that as contradictory of what I'm doing . . . I have every intent that this will be a full inquiry.''

She also said that naming an outside counsel could get in the way of the committee making its own judgments.

''We need original source information where it's practical and where it's reasonable,'' she said. ''I think we're going to do a better job than those who would have turned it over to someone.''

Others have said that only an outside counsel could conduct a complete, impartial investigation.

Johnson disagreed with those who say the committee has established special rules for Gingrich, and she defended the committee's action in setting aside the ethics manual in the speaker's case.

''My job, as I perceive it, is not to fulfill some sort of generic expectation,'' she said. ''My job is to provide just consideration of the complaints that come before us.''

The ethics manual says that once the committee decides a complaint meets certain criteria, it may begin a formal inquiry. The panel then is to split into subcommittees—one to investigate the complaints and the other to hear sworn testimony and decide the validity of the complaints.

Instead, the committee has yet to vote to conduct a formal investigation while the full panel has taken sworn testimony from more than a dozen witnesses, including Gingrich and Murdoch.

Johnson said the committee's 1992 investigation of members who bounced checks on the now-defunct House Bank showed the ethics manual process to be an ''utter and total disaster.'' McDermott served on the ethics sub, that recommended making public the names of only 24 members who abused their banking privileges.

But Johnson and three other committee Republicans objected that all those who wrote bad checks should be named. Eventually, Johnson's position prevailed. She said the bank investigation unfairly harmed the reputations of many members, adding, ''I don't want a result like that.''

Government watchdog groups that have recently joined the call for an outside counsel with unlimited authority to handle the Gingrich case include Common Cause, Public Citizen and the Congressional Accountability Project, a Ralph Nader organization.

A ''YES'' VOTE ON BOSNIA MEANS TROOP DEPLOYMENT

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

Mr. NEUMANN. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon we will be addressing the Defense appropriations bill on the floor of the House. While the chairman, the gentleman from Alaska [Mr. YOUNG], and the chairman, the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. LIVINGSTON], deserve praise for hitting the budget targets, we need to be aware of one other happening because of this bill. We need to be aware of the fact that this bill allows President Clinton by himself to deploy United States troops, young men and women, United States men and women, to Bosnia.

Make no mistake, a ''yes'' vote on the Defense appropriations bill means United States troops will be deployed into Bosnia. If we deploy United States troops in Bosnia, we, the United States, must be prepared to accept the consequences. The Post this morning reports that the White House is now coming to ask for this deployment. If these troops are deployed, we must be prepared for our young men and women coming home in body bags, and we must be prepared for $3 billion price tag that goes with the deployment of United States troops in Bosnia.

The Defense appropriations bill originally contained an amendment that would have required the President to come to Congress for a vote of confidence, for an acceptance of the expenditure of these funds prior to deploying troops into the Bosnian arena. If we vote yes on the Defense appropriations bill today, we must be prepared to accept the consequences.

I do not even wish to advocate a yes or no vote but, rather, I would encourage my colleagues to be prepared for the consequences of the votes they make, and the consequences clearly are our young people being returned in body bags and a $3 billion expenditure.

EXTENDING AUTHORITIES UNDER MIDDLE EAST PEACE FACILITATION ACT

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on International Relations be discharged from further consideration of the bill (H.R. 2404) to extend authorities under the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act of 1994 until November 1, 1995, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration in the House.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HEFLEY). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from New York?

Mr. HAMILTON. Reserving the right to object, Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to object, and I yield to the gentleman from New York [Mr. GILMAN], chairman of the committee, to explain his unanimous-consent order.

Mr. GILMAN. Mr. Speaker, H.R. 2404 temporarily extends the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act of 1994, which otherwise would have expired on October 1, 1995. That act was previously extended by Public Law 104–17 and by Public Law 104–22.

H.R. 2404 extends the act until November 1, 1995, and includes a transition provision to make certain that there is no lapse in the act's authority.

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, continuing my reservation of objection, I do not intend to object, I simply want to note that I do not think it is helpful to Israel, to the Palestinians or to maintaining momentum in the peace process to have to come to this floor every 30 or 45 days to extend these authorities on a short-term basis. I hope that we will be able to make this the last short-term extension of the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act and that we can instead fashion a provision that holds the parties to the Middle East peace process to the terms of the agreements they have negotiated but which does not go beyond those terms.

Mr. Speaker, continuing my reservation of objection, I yield to the gentleman from New York [Mr. ENGEL].

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend from Indiana for yielding to me.

Mr. Speaker, this is now the third time that we are renewing the Middle East Peace Facilitation Act. This, in my opinion, is not really the way to go about it. Each time we renew it, we say it is for a temporary moment until we can put the law together and pass a new Middle East Peace Facilitation Act and each time there is just a simple renewal.

I do not think this is a good process. We have had legislation introduced. I have introduced a bill. We have had no markups on the committee. We had one hearing last week, but we have not had any markups.

The Senate is moving ahead with its foreign ops bill. Senator HELMS and Senator PELL are putting together language. Quite frankly, I see no reason why we should cede our authority to the Senate. Why should the Senate language ultimately be the language that is adopted?

I think that this House has a very important role to play and, frankly, I think that our Committee on International Relations ought to put all the legislation that has been proposed at a hearing, talk about it, do a markup, have a markup of the bill, and we ought to come up with new MEPFA language. That is the way I think that we ought to proceed.

Yasser Arafat's feet must be held to the fire. I know there is a signing going on in the White House today. I intend to be there. All of us hope and pray for Middle East peace, but I think a just peace will only be a just peace if there is compliance on all sides, and that includes the PLO and it includes Mr. Arafat.

I believe that United States money should continue to flow for this process, if the Palestinians, if Mr. Arafat is keeping his pledges. If he does not, then I think the money ought to stop; only Mr. Arafat and the PLO can determine that.

So I do not think an automatic renewal is the way to go. I understand it is only for 30 days and I will not object to the 30 days, but I will be hard-pressed 30 days from now to come here and agree to another extension.

Again, I think that the peace process will only work and American money should only continue to flow if both sides are adhering to what they agreed. We do not have that now. The covenants are still in place, talking about the destruction of Israel, the PLO covenants, and Yasser Arafat's track record has been less than admirable. So I think that while we probably have no choice today, again, I think that our committee, and I would hope that the chairman, in fact, I wonder if the chairman would give a commitment that we would have a markup of my