over $100,000, hardly people who are needy, while 75 percent of the seniors covered by Medicare live on less than $24,000 a year, and they are going to be the losers.

The Republicans are going to rob middle- and low-income seniors of their choice of doctors, access to hospitals, and high quality health care to give tax cuts to a handful of wealthy Americans. It is unconscionable.

The Republican bill is bad legislation. The Republicans know it cannot stand up to scrutiny. That is why they are making a mockery of the legislative process. No opportunity for comment from the 37 million affected Americans and they will ram this through the House in just a few short hours of debate. That is why I held Medicare forums in my district so my constituents could be herd. And I did hear from seniors, their family members, hospitals, doctors, nurses, home care providers, and these wonderful people shined a very bright light on why the Republicans need to gag the public in order to ram their bill through.

Let me tell you what people have to say. Two working women with mothers in their 80's told me their mothers receive home nursing care covered by Medicare. This care allows their mothers to remain in their homes. Without this care these working women would either have to quit their jobs and become nurses or spend every penny they have to pay for a nursing home. It is not small change, because nursing home care averages about $40,000 a year.

Doctors told me that these cuts will force them to make unethical choices every day. Doctors will have the technology to alleviate pain or improve the quality of life but they will not have the money to use it. It is called rationing, and doctors will be forced to do it every day.

To their credit, the Massachusetts Medical Society has broken ranks with the AMA and does not support this bill. And the director of elder services in Berkshire County shared the following story with me and the one I want to leave you with.

In Ashley Falls, Phil and Agnes are waging a battle with her advanced Parkinson's disease. Both are determined to stay together at home, but her current care needs demand so much of Phil. Her disease prevents any movement. Through the VNA, Agnes' Medicare provided home health care aides once each day and physical therapy twice each week. Elder services provides respite for Phil twice a week. A home health aide cares for Agnes so Phil can shop and run errands and maybe even go to the doctor himself. Medicare does not cover it all. Phil does feeding, toileting, and dressing for Agnes as well as laundry, cooking, and cleaning, but assistance the Medicare-funded aide gives daily makes this huge task doable. There are no children to help.

I do not know, but how do the Republicans think this couple is going to manage? The truth is, they are not thinking about the human consequences of this enormous Medicare cut. The truth is they just do not care what happens to Agnes and Phil. And for those reasons, I intend to vote tomorrow against their bill.

SENIORS NEED NOT BE SCARED

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Washington [Mrs. SMITH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. SMITH of Washington. Mr. Speaker, I have been listening tonight and listening to some of the statements I have heard. And I have worked with the elderly for years, chaired the long-term care committee in our State, have worked in the nursing homes and delivered meals to the elderly in their homes. And tonight I think there is a whole lot of calls that need to be made into our districts from 430-plus legislators telling these people the truth. We can argue over the future. We can argue over our assumptions, but we have to tell them the truth.

When I heard tonight a quote from an older lady saying, and this was from the lady from North Carolina, from a person in her district, she said, without Medicare I will have nothing. I pictured faces that I know.

I hope that women from North Carolina assured her there was nothing before Congress that took away her medical care, because what I could picture is them listening to all of this and believing their medical bills are not going to be paid next month or next year or the next year. And I think the important thing is that we all tell them, please, do not be frightened. We are trying to save this system. And it is important that you know you do not have to be frightened. Because you see, what you are saying by not calling them and telling them we are talking about systems, we are not talking about tomorrow for you, what you are doing is you are scaring them. And you need to tell them they do not have to worry. If you do anything less than that, you are using the elderly for your political gain, whether you are Republican or Democrat. And that is so shameful to these vulnerable people, sitting in their homes listening to TV night after night, listening to this.

I also heard earlier, we are going to dismantle Medicare. No. That is not true. No matter who says it. No matter who is listening, that is not true. The good thing that happens with untruths is the future proves them out. If after this vote next month you find out by a letter in the mail, a proclamation in the newspaper, that Medicare has been dismantled, then you know tonight what was said here was true. But you will find next month, time is going to show that is not true.

If next month all of a sudden you are required to have a great co-pay or you are forced into some system you do not want, then you will know what was said tonight is true. But let me tell you what you are going to find.

No one should be frightened, if you are sitting in your home, if you are just not sure, do not be frightened. The trustees report in February frightened me. I was a new legislator. I had got that Presidential report from his trustees when it said Medicare was going to be bankrupt. And I thought, I have heard every so many years Medicare is going to go bankrupt and I do not agree with it. I cannot believe it. The Federal Government has a lot of money and they will make it work. So I started going through it on a flight home. Takes me about 7 hours to fly home to the west coast.

When I got done with the actuaries, and I do know how to read these reports, I found out it was true. The amount of imbalance is not sure. It is hard to tell how long I will live and how much we will take out of it or what health care costs will be, but for sure it is not stable. Some say it is, $100 billion, some say $200 billion. It is just not stable.

One thing that is for sure is middle of next year we start draining that trust fund, the money we have put in, and we take more money out than goes in. We know that for sure. But I resolved, when I read that report, that I was going to join an effort that would stabilize it, secure it, and then I found out something else. You cannot secure it after 15 years. I am 45. When I hit Medicare, I am with the baby boomers. I blow it up.

There are two-to-one, my two, I have six grandkids and I have enough. Some people do not have enough. And they cannot sustain the number of elderly that will be on it. But for right now, I want to make a commitment.

I will tell you, do not worry. It is going to be stabilized and this is a responsible approach tomorrow. And you will have Medicare tomorrow, next week, and next year.

MEDICARE REFORM

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

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. DEUTSCH].

Mr. DEUTSCH. Mr. Speaker, again, I appreciate it because I have asked four times for my colleagues on the other side to yield for a specific question.

In response to statements that were made from four different of my Republican colleagues, I think it is symptomatic that they refuse to yield, that they refuse to engage in a dialog on this issue because the truth is, the truth is on our side. It is the old maxim: When the truth is on your side and you have the facts, that is what you argue. When the law is on your side, that is what you argue. And when you have nothing, all you do is argue.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BUNN of Oregon). The gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] controls the time.

Mr. DEUTSCH. Mr. Speaker, if we can focus in on this chart, the facts are that in the 30 years of the Medicare system, for 12 of those 30 years there was less of an actuarial life than there is today; less than 7 years, 12 of the 30 years. This is not a crisis that all of a sudden erupted. That is the nature of insurance programs.

Contrary to what my colleagues have said, we took some tough votes in my first year in the Congress. We took a tough vote to change some of the actuarial problems in the system. We can do that again. But we are choosing not to. This program that is going to pass this House tomorrow has nothing to do with saving Medicare. It is a flat-out lie. The $270 billion number is a flat-out lie. That has nothing to do with the trustee report.

Mr. HOKE. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. DEUTSCH. Mr. Speaker, no, I will not yield.

What the Republican plan is doing is creating a false choice for Medicare beneficiaries throughout this country. What they are doing essentially is a false choice because, if the Medicare reimbursement, traditional Medicare, becomes so low and balanced billing is eliminated, which it will be, which will allow physicians to charge whatever they want, where today they cannot and protect senior citizens, over 30 million Americans, when that changes, seniors will be forced into HMO's, not by choice. It will be a false choice. They will be forced into HMO's.

Let me just conclude that seniors in this country believe that Republicans want to save Medicare probably as much as the Jewish community in this country believes that Farrakhan should be the head of the Jewish Federation. It is just not a reality. I think this chart and the outright distortions that have been made on this floor this evening and will be made tomorrow, the numbers speak for themselves.

I thank the gentleman for yielding time.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, let me point out that one of the major trustees, Secretary of Treasury Rubin, when he sent a letter to the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. GEPHARDT] on September 21, 1995, he said in the letter, simply said, ''No Member of Congress should vote for the $270 billion of Medicare cuts believing that reductions of this size have been recommended by the Medicare trustees or that such reductions are needed now to prevent an imminent funding crisis.

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Basically what is happening here, and I will say it again, is that this level of cuts, $270 billion, is needed to pay for the $245 billion tax cut for the wealthy that the Republicans are going to propose next week. Our offices and my office has been flooded with calls and letters from senior citizens protesting these cuts. I know one of the previous speakers said that seniors should not be scared. They should be scared because this is going to devastate the Medicare Program, and if I could just point out, I mean I have been getting hundreds, if not thousands, of letters. Here are just some of them from my constituents complaining and concerned about these Medicare cuts the Republicans are proposing.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have a lot of time, but I just want to point out one thing that I think is really important here tonight and for tomorrow when we take the vote on this bill. These cuts in the Medicare Program, what they are going to do is squeeze Medicare so much that we will no longer be able to provide quality health care in this country for senior citizens, and the squeeze, the loss of money in the Medicare Program, is going to hurt the health care system across the board in New Jersey. We will see hospitals close. We will see services cut from hospitals and other providers because there is going to be so little money available to the Medicare system.

The reason I mention that is because today in the State legislature in the State of New Jersey in Trenton a number of the Democratic legislators took to the floor and pointed out that because of all the cuts that the Republicans are making in Medicare what is going to happen in New Jersey and probably in a lot of other States in this country is that States are going to have to raise taxes to make up for the loss in Medicare funds that we are imposing here, and that is simply not fair. It is simply not fair to the citizens of New Jersey and to a lot of other people around this country when we see this Medicare Program deteriorate and States having to make up for the funding loss.

MEDICARE

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

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, as the Republicans in Congress move toward their goal of reducing the Federal deficit at any cost, they are about to approve deep, unprecedented cuts in the financing and delivery of health care to our Nation's elderly and poor. These cuts will be far deeper, and have far greater consequences than the proposed cuts in almost any other part of the budget, totaling $270 billion over 7 years while financing a tax break for the wealthy.

Since 1965, the Federal Government has provided a minimum standard of health care for all eligible citizens through the Medicare Program. Republicans in both the House and Senate want to end this national commitment by terminating the individual Federal entitlement to Medicare coverage. In my State of Florida, 2.6-million-plus older Americans will find that their health security is threatened by the GOP proposal. In fact, over the next 7 years, Florida stands to lose $28 billion from Medicare.

Mr. Speaker, I represent seven counties which cover central and south Florida. I am concerned that these draconian cuts will overwhelm my district, and the Nation. In Dade County alone, $4.8 billion in Medicare funding would be lost over a 7-year period. What does this meaning for recipients? It means that each of Dade's 285,900 beneficiaries who want to stay with the current fee-for-service Medicare Program would face an average of $5,575 in additional out-of-pocket costs over 7 years. For a couple, that figure rises to $11,150 over the same 7-year period. Obviously seven is not a lucky number for Floridians. In fact, I don't think there are any lucky numbers in this debate except, of course, the $245 billion tax cut for the wealthy.

You see, Mr. Speaker, regardless of their income or health, senior citizens who depend on Medicare will see their out-of-pocket-costs increase. This is pure egalitarianism. And in health care, there really is no such thing. No two people have exactly the same needs or need exactly the same care. The GOP proposal does not take into consideration particular merits, efficiencies, or needs of the recipients. Each senior will receive an equal share—each of which is underfunded. The majority in Congress wants to give our seniors a voucher and let them shop around. But how appealing is a market of lower reimbursement fees, higher premiums, and reduced benefits?

Perhaps we, as a nation, should be looking at needs of people instead of numbers of dollars. The bottom line should not only apply to reductions, it should also reflect the effectiveness and efficacy of our seniors' needs. Mr. Speaker, Congress should eschew expensive and frequently ineffective efforts to rescue Medicare. But I'm not at all sure that turning Medicare over to the private insurance industry is the answer. Contrary to the majority's belief, in the private sector, all that glitters is not gold. And frankly, if this proposal is implemented, I'm afraid of how quickly our golden years will turn black.

Republican cuts in Medicaid are equally disheartening. The formula used to develop the Republican plan is soaked in demographic denial—it ignores Florida's status as a growth State. Under the Republican proposal, the annual Medicaid growth rate would be capped at a percentage far below what the State would need to take care of its underserved and unserved population. The consequences of block granting Medicaid are bleak, with the combined effects being forced hospital closings and uninsured Floridians. Even worse, the determining formula is based on outdated figures which penalize growth States. Thus, in Florida, the total number of individuals on Medicaid will grow by 10 to 12 percent a year. However, the Republican proposal will only allow Medicaid to grow at a rate 6 percent—about half the current 10 percent growth rate. Governor Chiles understands that cuts of this magnitude would harm Florida and agrees that