

Medicare Savings Doubtful. And it refers to the gaping budgetary hole in the Republican plan. It talks about the fact that it is gimmicky, that over a third of the so-called savings the Republicans have in their pay more, get less plan has not yet been spelled out.

Of course, instead of being candid with the American people and telling them how far they are going to reach into the pockets of seniors in reforming, as they call it, Medicare, instead of explaining the details of the hit on America's seniors, on America's disabled population, our Republican colleagues come back and say, "Well, where is your plan? If you don't like our pay more, get less plan, why don't the Democrats come forward with a plan?"

I would say that if what they are waiting for is a plan from the Democratic Party to take \$270 billion in cuts from Medicare, they are going to wait forever because we are not going to have that kind of plan. If what they are waiting for is a plan from the Democrats to take money out of Medicare in order to fund tax cuts, tax breaks for the most privileged people in our society, they can wait a long time because we are not going to have that kind of plan.

Mr. Speaker, they have talked so much about a trustees' report and how they have to secure Medicare from bankruptcy, and yet the premium increases that they are proposing, what they have never told the American people, they are going to raise the cost of health care in their pay more, get less plan in part B, but not one penny of the premium increases that they propose is going to be contributed to the Medicare trust fund that they seem so concerned about. Not one penny of those premium increases that they ask America's seniors, that they ask America's disabled population to contribute in escalating health care costs, not one penny is going to secure or prevent any troubles with the Medicare trust fund.

The Democrats are ready to come together to secure the trust fund. We were ready last year in that regard, certainly my colleagues. I was not here at that time, but they worked to secure the trust fund. What did the Republicans do? What has been their contribution to secure and prevent the bankruptcy of the trust fund?

In their so-called Contract With America, they made the trust fund less secure. They took revenues that would go into the trust fund, that were contributed by the most wealthy of our seniors, and they took those revenues in the contract bill out of the trust fund so that it will be less secure if their proposals are adopted than if we keep on the existing law.

I believe that we need bipartisan support to have genuine reform with Medicare. The gentleman from Kansas referred to waste and fraud in the system, and there are seniors all over this country that can point to examples of mismanagement in the program. We

need to ferret that out. We need to find ways to improve the efficiency of the system. But you do not begin that process by setting some imaginary \$270 billion figure that you need in order to fulfill campaign promises. You do not begin there. You begin in a bipartisan, respectful manner consulting with our Nation's seniors, consulting with the experts and trying to reach a balanced proposal designed to improve Medicare, not to destroy it.

It is a lot like a fellow that got lost over in east Texas and he was looking around and trying to get directions and he said, "How do you get from here to Oklahoma?" And the farmer that he came onto said, "Well, I don't know the precise path to get there but I sure wouldn't start from here."

The Democrats are saying, do not start from the premise that you need to take \$270 billion out of the pockets of American seniors. Do not start from the premise that you need to take money from Medicare in order to fund a tax break for America's privileged few. Start from the premise that we need to improve and strengthen Medicare so that we will be there for generations to come, so that it can serve the next generation of Americans in just the way it has protected America's seniors for the last 30 years since Lyndon Johnson signed it into law, a system that is one of the grandest accomplishments of this Congress that is out there delivering health care to 99 percent of Americans today. Let us preserve and protect that plan. As America's seniors find out about it, it is upside down, but so is their plan. The pay more, get less Republican plan must be rejected.

SLOWING THE GROWTH OF MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. STEARNS] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I would say to the gentleman from Texas, if he wishes a copy of the plan, he certainly can read about it in the Wall Street Journal, he can read about it in the Washington Post or the Washington Times. Furthermore, the slowing of the growth in Medicare is what has been proposed by Republicans, it is pretty much what President Clinton proposed last year in his health care bill. So what we are all trying to do here is to slow the growth down and save the program.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I am here to talk about Medicare and Medicaid together, the program for our elderly, disabled, and low-income women and children, but I am here to talk again about waste, fraud, and abuse in this program.

The spending on these programs, as my colleagues know, has gone up at 10.5 percent in the private sector, it has gone up at 4.5 percent. We need to

bring the spending down, but part of the reason the spending has gone up so high is because of the waste, fraud, and abuse in these programs. Some people estimate this waste, fraud, and abuse at 12 percent of these two programs, or \$30 billion, as high as \$44 billion for the two programs combined.

An indication of how pervasive this program is was summed up recently by a Clinton high official. This person was the Human Services Inspector General, June Gibbs Brown, and this is what she said, Mr. Speaker: "The basic structure of the current health care system is almost as if it had been designed for the very purpose of promoting waste, fraud, and abuse." Now, that is a startling admission.

The truth is that such behavior is not restricted to just one segment. Providers and beneficiaries alike seem guilty of bilking the system for personal gain. Examples of these have been recounted in numerous hearings on the Committee on Commerce on which I serve and the Health Care Subcommittee. However, today I will share with you several examples that have been reported in the Reader's Digest.

I was heartened by the fact that this wonderful publication has presented this because so many readers subscribe and purchase the Reader's Digest, and so they too will be able to identify the waste, fraud, and abuse from these articles.

The first step is to identify the sources of abuse and then to put the mechanism into place that will correct the situation and prevent such abuse in the future. We, in our plan, do that.

One such scheme that was reported in the Reader's Digest dealt with a doctor. His wife and his 14-year-old daughter were working together. The doctor assigned his 14-year-old daughter the task of taking and reading the x rays. On a good day, the office submitted 180 claims. The take was \$4.5 million over the year for this particular doctor, his wife, and his daughter. They submitted these fraudulent claims to some 40 insurance companies. What finally finished this lucrative and costly scam was that the Customs officials became suspicious when, during the course of investigating drug money laundering, they noticed that the doctor's check cashing patterns were strange. It makes one wonder why this was not detected by the Health Care Financing Administration. Are they not the body that is supposed to detect this?

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, one of HCFA's contractors suspended five computer-alert programs that had saved taxpayers \$4 million in just 3 months. Why was this done? The volume of suspicious claims had become impossible for the staff to review. In fact, the General Accounting Office found that half of Medicare fraud and abuse complaints are not even investigated. The GAO told Congress, "HCFA needs to guard a thousand doors, but has the resources for only a couple doors."

Perhaps the most egregious account that was cited involved the National Medical Enterprise, which was a \$3.9 billion New York Stock Exchange company that owned psychiatric hospitals, which operated 86 psychiatric hospitals nationwide. Sadly enough, witnesses testified before the State legislators that social workers, school counselors, probation officers, and even ministers served as, quote, "headhunters" and were paid bounties for referring individuals to some of these hospitals.

In Texas, a Texas State senator led the investigation of this in his State and stated, quote, "people were locked up against their will. Then they were miraculously cured when their insurance benefits ran out."

My own State of Florida also has its share of con artists. In fact, in March of this year, Florida Medicaid found that at least six taxicab companies and two individuals were ripping off the Medicaid Program designed to give needy patients free rides to the doctors. In the course of 317 days, one company received \$1,134,164 for driving patients over 1 million miles. As one investigator wryly noted, "That is enough to travel 41 times around the Earth at the equator."

My colleagues, the Republican plan includes ways to stop waste, fraud, and abuse and it is important we address this matter immediately. No matter which party you represent, which side of the aisle you are on, we can all agree that waste, fraud, and abuse is something that bothers most Americans and we need to stop it now.

DEMOCRACY IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentlewoman from the District of Columbia [Ms. NORTON] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, many are new to Congress this year and the Republican majority is altogether new in having the obligation to get 13 appropriations through the House of Representatives. The District of Columbia appropriation is the only one remaining.

The District of Columbia appropriation is a PILOT, a payment in lieu of taxes, like those in virtually every State in the Union. It is not a grant. We are paid because the Federal Government preempts much of the prime land in the District and we cannot develop on that land and because we cannot develop above a certain height.

Unlike last year, there is plenty of reason to vote for the District budget this year. We had a very severe struggle last year, but on the merits this year, the budget went through appropriation hearings without controversy. Why? Because there is a control board in place that keeps things in check, because employees have given a whopping 12-percent give-back, and because the

District has downsized 20 percent, twice as many positions as the Congress asked for.

Yet, there are propositions before the subcommittee mark this afternoon that no Republican and no Democrat can embrace. Some of these propositions would force law on people, even though the Congress is not accountable to those people, because it would force changes in local law.

It is surely a principle of this House that only through the ballot can basic law be changed. Only those who can reject or embrace what you do have a right to have law made for them. The governing theme of the 104th Congress, my colleagues, is devolving power back to the localities. You cannot have any credibility with that theme if you usurp local power here in the District of Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, many in the majority find much in this nine-to-one Democratic city with which to disagree. Yes, you are Republicans, you are in the majority. Most of us are Democrats. Surely you would not want to force Republican change in the manner of congressional dictators. That surely cannot be your desire.

To be sure, the Constitution gives you some powers over the District of Columbia, but James Madison did not mean for you to overturn local laws. He meant you to guard the Federal presence. This is a Democratic city, so who can be surprised that there is rent control? Some would take back, overturn rent control, and put their own version of decontrol place instead of our version of decontrol. Some would privatize our schools. The Mayor wants to privatize some of our schools. Many on the schoolboard want to do that. If we are not doing it fast enough for you, wait a while. This is a democracy. This is America.

Mr. Speaker, for 20 years there have been high-profile controversial restrictions put on our appropriation, but never has the Congress tried to change mainstream council legislation. I ask you in the name of democracy not to do it today.

What is being proposed is a radical departure from basic democracy, an invasion into the very body of home rule itself. I ask you not to do it. I ask you to be true to your own principles. Put yourself in my place. Put yourself in the place of the people whom I represent. They do not have full help-governing powers. Please leave them with what self-government powers they have. Please remember this afternoon in the subcommittee, in the full Committee on Appropriations, and when our budget comes to this House, that almost all of that budget is raised in the District of Columbia.

Above all, remember that this is America, that you are Americans, and that we are Americans. The Speaker himself came to a town meeting in my district. It was a gutsy and important and historic moment, and he said before all the people I represent, I do not

intend to micromanage the affairs of the District of Columbia, I do not intend that home rule be overturned. I believe the Speaker. I ask you to follow the Speaker. I ask you to respect the rights of the people I represent.

This is the first time that the District of Columbia budget will come before a Republican majority in 20 years of home rule. The country is watching; not just my constituents. The entire country is watching.

Will the Republican majority force its will on a Democratic city that is powerless to fight back, that has no voting representation on the floor of this House, that has no representation whatsoever in the Senate of the United States, though we are fourth per capita in income taxes paid in this country among the 50 States? Please respect our rights. Please treat the people I represent as you and your constituents would be treated.

PLAN FOR MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, on Friday, I met in New Jersey again with a number of senior citizens as part of an outreach that myself and some of the other Democratic Congressmen in New Jersey have been doing on a regular basis. This time we were in Gloucester Township in Congressman ANDREWS' district and we had about 200 or 300 senior citizens who were very concerned about the Republican proposals to cut Medicare by \$270 billion.

Mr. Speaker, the problem that the seniors had is that they feel very strongly that they are not getting enough information about exactly what the Republican plan is, and the fact of the matter is, they are right. We are still not provided with the details about what Speaker GINGRICH and the Republican leadership intend to do with the Medicare Program.

Last Thursday, the Speaker and Senator DOLE released their so-called plan to reform Medicare, but unfortunately, once again, the plan falls far short in regards to any specific details, and the plain fact is that the Republicans have still not offered any substantive Medicare plan.

We do know certain things though. We do know that the cut, the \$270 billion, is the largest cut in the history of the Medicare Program, and we also know that there is no way to implement that level of cut, that magnitude of cuts in Medicare without at the same time charging seniors more for Medicare and providing them with less services.

My friend from Texas had the sign that he was using before and I will hold it up again. It says, the GOP Medicare plan, pay more, get less. The bottom line is that no matter how we cut it,