we started out saying earlier, we believe that it is time. It is timely to get the Federal Government employees back to work. We want to pay those folks who are working. We want to get the ones who are not working back on the job, and we think that is the right thing to do.

We want to move that issue from the table, or speaking at least for myself, so that we can get to this focus on the 7-year balanced budget. I am hearing a lot of people saying, of course, I support a balanced budget, but they did not vote for it and they have not cosponsored one. There are Democrats and Republicans who have voted for a balanced budget and have cosponsored one, but there are a lot who have not.

I do not believe a Member has the right to come to the well and say they support a budget if they do not have one at this point, because the people of America pay us $134,000 a year not just to criticize what the other side is doing but to bring our own ideas to the table. If Members have their own ideas, they can criticize mine, but if they are just sitting there criticizing without a plan of their own, maybe they should return some of their paycheck permanently.

With that, Mr. Speaker, we yield back the balance of our time.

REPUBLICANS' GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN AFFECTS THE COUNTRY'S MOST VULNERABLE CITIZENS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. METCALF). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, before my colleagues and I get started this evening, I would just like to make one comment about the commentary of the prior speaker having to do with the earned income tax credit, a program that, I might add, was started by President Ronald Reagan. And to refresh people's memories, he was a Republican President of the United States. President Reagan started the program to help to keep working families off of welfare.

I might also remind my colleagues of the words of another Republican, Mr. Jack Kemp, and these were his words in October of 1995, and again I quote. ''I hope you guys'', making reference to the Republicans, ''do not go too far on removing the EITC, because that is a tax increase on low-income workers and the poor, which is unconscionable at this time.''

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, would my friend yield for 30 seconds?

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I want to finish my commentary and then get into our program, so I want to finish what I am going to say here.

I might also say that it is interesting that in the tax break package that is being offered by the Republican majority in this House that there was another Ronald Reagan program called the alternate minimum tax. For those who do not know what the alternate minimum tax is, this is a tax that the richest corporations in the United States pay.

President Reagan, with very good thought and vision, put this into practice, because oftentimes the richest corporations in this country, when they took all of their deductions, would find that they had a zero tax obligation. He thought, as did others, that it would be unfair to have that occur, that the richest corporations in the country would not be paying some portion or a fair share of taxes the way that ordinary Americans pay their taxes. So he put in a 20 percent rate, and the Congress approved of a 20 percent rate on the richest corporations in the country.

Into that tax package that the Republicans are proposing, the $245 billion tax break package, the alternate minimum tax is repealed, repealed, which means that, once again, if this passes and is law, that the richest corporations in the United States will have a zero tax obligation. It is a $17 billion windfall to the richest corporations.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind my Republican colleagues about that, and I also want to remind the listening public that what Mr. Kemp says, that tampering with the earned income tax credit, which the Republican package does in cutting the earned income tax credit, is an increase on taxes for working families at the same time as my Republican colleagues are decreasing taxes for the richest corporations in this Nation.

No wonder the public said to the President of the United States, 60 percent of the public said veto Mr. GINGRICH's budget bill and do not balance the budget on the backs of seniors and Medicare and Medicaid, and on students and education, and on working families with being unfair to them in terms of taxes.

My colleagues are here tonight so that we may have an opportunity to talk about something that is on everyone's minds, everyone's lips, and it is in all of the news. And what we have tried to do is to organize a special order tonight on behalf of the millions of senior citizens in this country and their families who are sitting at their kitchen tables tonight struggling to cope with the impact of the Government shutdown. Day No. 20.

Our seniors, including many of this Nation's veterans, live on fixed incomes. They do not have money to fall back on when their benefits are cut off. Now, these vulnerable citizens have become pawns in what is a very, very cynical political game being played by House Republicans, who are refusing to open the Federal Government, despite what they tell the public. They had the opportunity to open the Federal Government 12 times, the latest was yesterday.

Let us be clear about what is happening here. The President of the United States, the Democrats, responsible Republicans all agree that it is time to end the Government shutdown and it is time for Speaker GINGRICH and the right wing extremists in the House to stop holding America's seniors hostage to their political games. It is power politics at its worst, is what we are watching.

BOB DOLE, and I don't have the quote up here, but I will get it, BOB DOLE, the Republican majority leader of the other body, wants to reopen the Government. He said enough is enough, and he is right. He is absolutely right. He said that this has gone about as far as it can go. We need now to put people back to work.

I don't want to misquote the majority leader. This is what he says. ''I don't see any sense in what we have been doing. I would hope that we would have quick action in the House. People have been gone from their jobs long enough. Enough is enough.''

□ 2115

And that quote was on January 2, 1996.

Now, how are seniors affected by the shutdown of the Federal Government? That is what my colleagues and I are here to talk about tonight. In my own district, the Third District of Connecticut, the Veterans Hospital in West Haven Connecticut cannot now legally pay for anything. They must depend on vendors to continue to provide, without payment, food, hearing aids, glasses, medical supplies, ambulance services and all of the lifesaving treatments provided our Nation's veterans.

Mr. Vincent Ng, the director of VA Hospitals in Connecticut, said ''We will do whatever is necessary to care for our patients. We hope our contractors will support the needs of the medical centers during this crisis situation so that we will be able to maintain our full standard of patient care.''

Our Nation's veterans should not be forced into paying for the failings of this Congress. Men and women who have put their lives on the line for this Congress and for this country deserve better than that.

Mr. Speaker, it is just not the veterans who are being hurt, but those who care for them as well. One VA employee called my office today to explain that he had received a paycheck of one week's pay and two weeks' worth of deductions. He called because he does not have any money for food. We made a reference for him and we directed him to the nearest food bank, to the nearest food pantry.

He is not alone. The plight of the VA employees in my district prompted Mayor Richard Borer of West Haven, CT, to make a public plea for donations to the local food shelters to help feed workers who are now not being paid. The people who care for our veterans deserve better.

The crisis facing our elderly veterans extends to every single State in this

Nation. If the Government shutdown continues, veterans benefits may run out. New claims are not being paid for VA pensions, rehabilitation counseling, education, and home loans.

Programs that provide food to the elderly are also in jeopardy if the Government shutdown continues. Funding for the Meals on Wheels Program has evaporated. To understand how many seniors rely on this service, let me again give an example of one of the Meals on Wheels providers in my district.

The New Haven Community Action Agency provides meals to 2,000 senior citizens every single day. Some 600,000 elderly Americans face the loss of Meals on Wheels, transportation, and personal care. What are we about in this Nation? What are these people doing to seniors and to veterans in this country?

The Meals on Wheels program in my State has suffered a 40 percent cut in funding because of the shutdown. It is unclear how much longer we will be able to carry the Federal Government's responsibilities to feed our elderly.

In addition, Federal funds to States for Medicaid have been severely limited. On December 27, States received only 40 percent of the estimated quarterly payment for Medicaid. Without further action, the Federal match for Medicaid and its 36 million beneficiaries of the Medicaid program, two-thirds are elderly and the disabled.

While the House Republican leadership refuses to reopen the Government, the Republican leadership in this body continue to take their paychecks. These same Republican leaders promised last year that they were going to make this Congress live under the same rules as everybody else, but today while seniors worry about the fate of elderly feeding programs, while veterans' health services are jeopardized, while seniors are suffering, the congressional paychecks just keep on coming to the leaders, to Mr. GINGRICH.

Mr. Speaker, I am returning my congressional pay back to the U.S. Treasury and will continue to do so until the Government is reopened.

If Speaker GINGRICH and the right wing extremists in the House of Representatives who are keeping this Government closed were forced to put their paychecks on the line, I think the crisis would be over in a heartbeat.

The President, Democrats, and Republicans in the U.S. Senate all want to reopen the Government and stop inflicting pain on our seniors and veterans. But a small band of extremists in this body are holding America hostage. Yesterday, when the Democrats voted to try to reopen the Government, only 2 Republicans were brave enough to join us. Only 2.

Democrats need 20 good Republicans. Twenty. Mr. Speaker, 197 Democrats are prepared to have voted to reopen this Government. We need 20 Republican votes. So, I am pleading with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to have the courage, have the courage to do the right thing, to show their allegiance to the American people instead of their allegiance to NEWT GINGRICH. Join us to reopen the Government and restore the services that the taxpayers have paid for and are paying for every single day that this Government is shut down. We only need 20 good Republicans, 20 patriots.

The 20-day Government shutdown is affecting more and more Americans. Seniors have been hit extremely hard, and remember, most older Americans live on extremely limited monthly budgets and are not able to compensate for the loss of vital Federal benefits.

Our Nation's veterans and other senior citizens should not be asked to pay the price of the Gingrich Government shutdown.

Mr. Speaker, I now yield time to my colleagues who have joined me on the floor tonight so we can engage in a dialog and discussion on this issue. I yield to my colleague from New Jersey, Mr. FRANK PALLONE, who has been a real warrior in this effort to reopen our Government and real friend of America's senior citizens.

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] for yielding to me tonight, and also to praise her for the fact that she is focusing tonight on how the shutdown particularly affects senior citizens and veterans.

I think it is important that we zero in on certain groups, because I think that is what the Republican Majority has done. Last night we talked a great deal about the EPA and environment and health and safety measures that are not being taken during the shutdown because the Republican majority effectively zeroed in on environmental protection and quality of life issues and has taken it upon themselves not only to shut down EPA and other such agencies, but also to cut back on funding and cripple these agencies in the future.

I think we are seeing the same thing happen with senior citizens. This whole debate over the budget is largely a function of Medicare and Medicaid. The fact that Democrats are opposed to the idea of giving huge tax breaks to wealthy Americans and taking money away from Medicare and Medicaid in order to fund those tax breaks.

Well, senior citizens are mostly impacted by cuts in Medicare as well as Medicaid, and I think it is no surprise, therefore, that a lot of the impact of this shutdown is falling squarely on senior citizens and also on veterans.

I just wanted, if I could, to spend a couple of minutes talking about what is happening in my home State of New Jersey. New Jersey right now is facing a financial crisis because of the Federal Government shutdown. It is particularly impacting senior citizens.

In order to pay for human services in New Jersey, the State borrowed yesterday $250 million to pay for Social Security services for the poor and elderly. The interest rates on these loans will be picked up by New Jersey taxpayers, while these same taxpayers watch services deteriorate.

Mr. Speaker, this is costing us money. Our constituents are seeing less and less services and they are going to have to pay more for it. If we look at the services provided to the elderly under the Older Americans Act, they are very much threatened right now in the State of New Jersey. In Middlesex County in my district, over 11,000 seniors directly benefit from the Older American Act programs, including Meals on Wheels.

The State is seeking to provide my county Offices on Aging with just enough money to keep the Meals on Wheels and the senior nutrition programs going for the rest of this month, but all the other programs funded under the Older Americans Act are threatened. This includes home health care, visiting nurses, critical care management, friendly visits, information referral services, legal services. There is no money available for these programs, many of which are essential for seniors' well-being and avoiding institutionalization.

I know that the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] has always stressed, as I have, preventive care. We do not have any prevention anymore during the shutdown. Another example is the loss of money for emergency housing assistance for seniors who cannot pay the rent.

We know that nationwide 10,000 Social Security workers have been laid off, putting a strain on the entire operation during what is the busiest month of the year, the beginning of the year. And it has been impossible for seniors to get through to the 800 number in the northeast region, and my office got a lot of calls complaining about this. Apparently, because of the lapse of the tax on airline tickets, the airline 800 numbers have been swamped with calls and, therefore, that blocks the use of the Social Security 800 number. It sounds like a minor impact, but it is very important.

Mr. Speaker, I called the Small Business Administration in New York-New Jersey and found it shut down completely and this affects the statewide SCORE program, in which retired businessmen provide assistance to small businesses and other businesses which help accommodate the elderly.

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk briefly about veterans. Every work day that Congress fails to provide funding to the Department of Veterans Affairs, 500 widows and other beneficiaries will not be paid the proceeds of veterans life insurance policies. There is no staff available to handle the claims because of the furloughs. Think about it. How would my colleagues like it if their spouse was unable to collect their life insurance benefits if they were to die? For this reason alone, I think the Republicans should support the continuing resolution.

As my colleague from Connecticut mentioned, employees of veterans hospitals are being forced to work without pay. I commend them for their dedication, but these employees are going to lose their motivation to work for the VA at some point. We are talking about veterans who dedicated their lives to this country. I just think it is totally outrageous.

The gentlewoman from Connecticut mentioned Medicare and Medicaid. It is reported in today's Star Ledger, which is our largest circulation daily in New Jersey, that in the State Human Services Department, the Secretary has said that the department faces the greatest potential for disruption at this point. Each day the Federal dispute goes on, the likelihood increases that a scheduled $130 million payment for Medicaid is going to be delayed and, of course, Medicaid, the majority of it, is used for medical care or nursing home care for senior citizens.

Let us look at the headlines of some of the papers about how our State, New Jersey, is really feeling the impact of this, and again the major impact or a significant part of the impact is on senior citizens and veterans. I just think it is so unfair. So many of us started this whole budget debate, if you will, and came to the floor months ago because we were concerned about the impact of these Republican cuts on Medicaid and Medicare, and now we are seeing the same senior citizens immediately affected by this Government shutdown.

I wanted to say one thing, and I will yield back, which is that I am somewhat encouraged by the fact that the gentlewoman mentioned that we only need 20 Republicans in order to get this continuing resolution passed and the Government open again. I heard that yesterday in the Republican conference there were 54 Republicans who wanted to vote for that. Really, the blame now is entirely on the Republican House leadership, on Speaker GINGRICH and the others, because they are afraid to bring this up because they know if they bring up the continuing resolution, we will get enough Republican votes to pass this with all the Democrats. Hopefully reason will prevail and if we keep this up, as the gentlewoman has so well, we are going to see some light over the next few days.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from New Jersey. I think that it is largely because it is what BOB DOLE said: ''Enough is enough.'' And it was a bipartisan consensus in the Senate to bring people back to work, let them earn their pay, and let us then sort out what budget differences that we have.

□ 2130

I also just want to mention one point because I am so delighted that you brought it up before I yield to the gentleman from Virginia, that it is this whole notion of focusing on balanced budget is just political posturing, because the issue has been what it always has been, what are our priorities in this budget. We all want to see our fiscal house be put in order.

A $245 billion tax break for the wealthiest Americans is not putting our fiscal house in order, especially at the expense of Medicare, Medicaid, education, and the environment.

Our Republican colleagues would like to continue to mask what they are doing, and I thank the gentleman for bringing that issue up again.

I now yield to the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. MORAN], who has represented Federal employees in the very, very best manner possible.

Mr. FROST. If the gentlewoman will yield for just a moment, I have just been informed, for members of the Committee on Rules who may be watching this debate, that the Committee on Rules will meet at 10 o'clock this evening, in 30 minutes, to consider a resolution on this particular matter of the Government shutdown. We do not know all the details, but that there will be a Committee on Rules meeting at 10, and I hope that something constructive will come from that.

Ms. DELAURO. I thank the gentleman. I would encourage members of the Committee on Rules to find their way to the Committee on Rules by 10 o'clock.

Mr. MORAN. I thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut for yielding to me, but more importantly for her continuing commitment to educate not just her constituents but this great Nation on what issues are at stake here, why we have come to this crisis.

It is a contrived crisis in terms of the Government shutdown. But the American people need to understand why the President cannot in good conscience accept the Republican 7-year plan, as the gentlewoman from Connecticut and the gentleman from New Jersey have continually emphasized he cannot. I do not think any President could in good conscience, knowing that it only takes $90 billion to make the Medicare Program solvent, cut the Medicare Program by $270 billion so that you can take $180 billion and pay it out in tax cut for the most affluent Americans.

In my State of Virginia, only 3.7 percent of the entire population of the State of Virginia would get the majority of those tax breaks. Now, they may all live in my district, but the point is, even so, it is wrong, and we do not want him to accept such a substantial cut in a high-priority national program in order to make the kinds of tax cuts that put us in this situation in the first place.

If it were not for those tax cuts in 1981, we would be in a surplus today, and, in fact, we probably would not even have a Federal debt. It is the interest we are paying on the debt incurred during the Reagan administration alone, just that debt, the interest on that debt is greater than the deficit today, which means if it were not for the debt incurred primarily because of those 1981 tax cuts, we would have a surplus budget today.

So let us understand where this problem originated, and here we are, deja vu. We are going to do the same thing all over again. We are going to start out with tax cuts that are politically popular, and then, now, the Republicans are promising, ''Well, we are not going to do that, just tax cuts. We are going to cut your programs.'' Wait and see.

The President cannot in good conscience accept such a dramatic cut in a program like Medicare when two-thirds of the cut goes into tax cuts. But it is not just dollars and cents, as the gentlewoman and gentleman have been emphasizing night after night. We know that about 60 percent of the Medicare population only cost the system about $500 a year. Ninety percent of Medicare beneficiaries cost the Medicare Program less than $1,300 a year.

The Republican plan, and they are absolutely right, it does increase each year, it starts by giving vouchers of about $4,800 a year and goes up to about $6,800. But think of this: If 90 percent of your population is only going to cost about $1,300 and you are getting a voucher of $4,800, there is a tremendous profit to be made. How? By avoiding the 10 percent who cost the system $29,000 a year.

And the reason the President cannot accept this Medicare plan is not just the cuts that go into tax breaks but it restructures the program. It tears down a fundamental concept, what we think is an American principle. It is called community rating. That is the technical term. But what it says is we are all in this together. Those 10 percent of the people that cost the system $29,000 in a year, they could be any of our parents or grandparents. We do not know who it is going to be. But if somebody has to have that help to stay alive, has to have that expensive treatment, the American people feel that it is the right thing to meet that need. That is community rating, and if somebody needs it, then the money will be there. That is what insurance is supposed to be all about.

But when you turn it over, when you privatize it, when you turn it over to managed care, what it will do is to set all of these various insurance companies who have as their motive profit, the Medicare program costs about 1.2 percent in administrative costs, and managed care companies, and many of them are wonderful, but their average profit was about 20 percent last year. Twenty percent of the premium goes into profit. They are going to go out, their bottom line being profit, and they are going to target this 90 percent of the Medicare program that will not cost them much to provide care for, and they are going to make a tremendous profit.

In fact, in the 15 States where we did test cases, very interesting, it cost the Medicare program more money because by managed care companies going in,

targeting this population, making it very difficult for anybody that is really sick or infirm to go in to many of the managed care plans, they stay in fee-for-service. And they wind up segmenting the population, and that 10 percent winds up being really dependent upon public hospitals at a much greater expense. That is what is going to happen under this program.

That 10 percent is not going to get the care they need. In fact, they are going to pay astronomical costs eventually in out-of-pocket expenses for care that they desperately need. That is what it is all about.

The medical savings accounts that we hear so much about, it is touted so much, and, of course, just follow the money trail. We know why it got into the bill in the first place: because of all the substantial donations to GOPAC and so on.

But the point is that last year the principal insurance company that offers medical savings accounts, of the insurance premiums that they received, 40 percent went for profit. Only 60 percent of the premiums they received went for medical care. So now we want to turn this over to a national program where 40 percent of the premiums the American people pay are going to go into corporate profit instead of medical care? No. We cannot allow it to be done. And that is what is happening. That is why the President cannot accept it.

Just quickly on Medicaid, that may be a worse situation. In Medicaid, the Governor of Virginia was one of the Governors, Republican Governors, who wrote a letter asking that onerous provisions be removed from the Medicaid program. What were the onerous provisions? Spousal impoverishment protection and the regulations that were passed during the Reagan administration. The spousal impoverishment provision, which says that if your spouse is in a nursing home, then the State cannot go and seize your home and your automobile and all of your assets, that has been weakened by this bill.

So, now, every spouse that has a spouse in a nursing home is threatened with not being able to hold on to their home and their assets.

What President Reagan did was to protect them up to at least $14,000 of assets. Gone.

And the other thing that the Republican Governors are so insistent about they do not want the regulations that were put in in 1987 in the light of unbelievable abuses in nursing homes where people were living in squalor, where they were strapped down, where they were drugged so they could not even talk, so that you would not have to provide for them, because when you do provide for them, when you do not drug them, when you do not strap them down in bed, then it requires a lot more personnel. Personnel are expensive.

If the States are on their own, they are going to be able to fire these personnel and go back to the old days of treating people without dignity, without respect, in inhumane ways. That is what we are afraid of. That is why we do not want the President to accept what we call structural changes. They are profound changes. They are threats to the entire concept, all the values that we have established throughout our generation, for the last 50 years, based upon the principle that everyone deserves respect, dignity, everybody has an opportunity to live out their lives with some concern, some care, and their family, even if they cannot afford it, to be able to be sure that their loved one is not going to be abused. That is what we are talking about: abused, exploited, and treated without human dignity. We cannot allow this country to go back to the inhumane conditions that gave rise to these protections. That would be eviscerated in this bill. It is wrong. The President cannot in good conscience accept it.

Those are some of the reasons why we are in the situation we are in, and they are reasons why the President cannot yield. What we have to do is go back to the way we have always done things in the past, get a continuing resolution, an interim spending bill, let the Government function, try to work things out. Then, if it comes to it, let next November be a national referendum on such profound issues.

I thank the gentlewoman from Connecticut for giving me the opportunity to spend some time with you.

Ms. DELAURO. I thank the gentleman. Thank you for going through those various programs.

I yield to the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. PALLONE. I just wanted to add something, because I am so glad that the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. MORAN] brought up how profound the differences are in some of these budget issues, particularly Medicare and Medicaid.

I was very aggravated, if you will, last night when I listened to some of our Republican colleagues suggest that, oh, there is nothing really to this, you know, the President can just sit down and split the difference on some of the numbers in terms of Medicare and Medicaid with the Republicans and everything will be fine, and he can sign the bill and all the Government employees can go back to work.

These are profound differences. Just briefly, on the Medicaid issue, which I consider really probably the most important issue, they are talking, the Republican leadership, essentially, with this budget, is talking about destroying Medicaid as we know it. The whole basis of Medicaid is that if you are below a certain income and need health insurance, that you are guaranteed the health insurance and that you are guaranteed a certain package of health insurance that provides for health care, that is necessary for a lot of low-income people.

Again, most of the money goes to pay for senior citizens, and what they are doing here is just saying we are going to block grant, we are going to cut the amount of money available, we are going to send it to the States, and we are going to let the State decide whether or not they want to cover certain people and what kind of benefits they want to give them.

Now, we know that is going to mean a lot of seniors who are now in nursing homes are not going to be eligible for nursing home care paid for through Medicaid. We know a lot of disabled people are probably not going to be on the eligibility list.

Of course, all the other things built into the Federal program that you mentioned, the nursing home standards, the fact that they cannot go after certain spousal assets or go after the assets of children, all of these things are thrown by the wayside. So we are talking about the end of Medicaid as we know it, and unless there is some sort of Federal guarantee that the people who now receive Medicaid would continue to receive it, the President cannot possibly agree to this.

So it is not just a question of splitting the numbers. You know, the Republicans, I think are talking about cutting $185 billion in Medicaid, and the President has said, well, perhaps the program can be cut by $35 billion or so. It is not just a question of splitting the numbers. This is a profound difference.

The Republicans are trying to basically eliminate the Medicaid Program as we know it. The same is true for Medicare.

Mr. MORAN. If the gentlewoman would yield for just a moment for a response, it is also true that there will no longer be any guarantee that everyone be treated at least equally within the State. The Governor can discriminate geographically, demographically, any way they want. It really does come down to the concept of community where we all care about our neighbors versus the concept of survival of the fittest.

□ 2145

This debate is instructive, important, and we ought to have it. Some people would say ''Look, if I am young and healthy, I should not have to support old and sick people. That is not my responsibility. I am on my own.''

That is a fair, legitimate point of view. And people in this country ought to make that determination, what this country is all about.

Others would say if we can afford to as a Government, then everyone has the right to live in some manner of dignity, with some basic minimal standards of respect and care, because we do not know when we are going to become impoverished, become sick, become dependent upon others.

Now, the American people ought to make these kinds of choices between the concept of community and the concept of survival of the fittest. But it ought to be done in a knowledgeable

way, it ought to be a national referendum. That election is 1994, where you had less than 40 percent of the people vote, certainly was not a mandate to eviscerate, to cast aside the concept of community that has guided this country and made it the greatest country in the world at the greatest time ever to live in the United States of America. There was no mandate given to do that.

Now, if the American people want to give that kind of a mandate next November, they will have an opportunity to decide. But that is how this ought to be decided, as a national referendum, not by holding Federal employees hostage and by these kinds of tactics of terrorism that we are seeing played out on the floor of this House day after day.

Ms. DELAURO. I would just say it is a question of values, where are our American values. I think the public has a very clear idea of where those values are in looking at protecting Medicare and Medicaid, the education for our young people, our environment, and making sure that working families can see their way in this country. That is what it is about, values.

I would like to yield to my colleague, the minority whip, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. BONIOR].

Mr. BONIOR. I thank my colleague for yielding and taking this time this evening and for engaging in this debate and this dialogue.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back, if I can, to a theme that we had been talking about and are still talking about that sometimes tends to get lost in this debate we are now engaged in with respect to the Government, and that is the whole question of what we are fighting for in this budget debate. We have talked about that this evening. But I want to reemphasize to people the Medicare piece, and why we feel so strongly about Medicare.

The Department of Labor this year did an analysis of what the income levels of our seniors were in this country. They found that 60 percent, 6-0, 60 percent of our seniors had incomes of $10,000 a year or less. That is combined Social Security and retirement income, $10,000 a year or less.

Now, what we have witnessed this year with these Medicare dismantling proposals by our colleagues, our Republican colleagues, is an additional cost out-of-pocket for these people who make $10,000 a year or less of probably close to $500.

When you add on top of that what the insurance industry plans to charge these people with respect to their Medigap insurance, you are talking another $300 to $500. We are talking about 10 percent of their income.

That is way we feel so strongly about this, because the proportion of shared burden here is not falling the way we think a community ought to deal with a question of this magnitude.

We are, as the gentleman from Virginia [Mr. MORAN] said, a country that has a sense of community, and this is really in many ways a question of is it the survival of the fittest, or are we going to act to take care of each other, to take care of our fathers and grandmothers and grandfathers and mothers who went before us. The folks now who are seniors are folks who fought, they went through the Depression, they saved this country and the western world, civilization, for democracy and freedom and justice. And here they are; they struggled all their lives, and these folks get to the point where they want to take a deep breath and try to enjoy the last remaining years, and we are sticking them, they are sticking them, excuse me, with a $1,000 bill basically.

That is what this is about in many ways. I could make the same case on Medicaid. Why are we so firm in our position with respect to Medicaid? Because 25 percent of the kids in this country get their health insurance through Medicaid. It is because so many of our seniors depend upon it for long-term care. It is because our disabled depend upon it.

Heaven knows, each one of us, someone in our family could be in that position at the drop of a hat, and they are. So when we fight for Medicaid and we fight for Medicare, we do it because it is really an important piece of community. It is an important piece of this country and what we are all about as Members of this institution, as members of our party.

So I thank the gentlewoman for taking the time this evening and for giving us an opportunity to talk about the effect on seniors. We need to get this Government back working full time. Senator DOLE was absolutely correct, enough is enough. ''I do not see any sense in what we have been doing,'' he said. I would hope that we would have a quick action in this House of Representatives. People have been gone from their jobs long enough. Enough is enough. The majority leader said that in the Senate. We need to take him at his word.

We are going to try tomorrow to bring up a clean CR. We are going to try again to get these folks back to work, these services provided to the American people, so we can get on with these budget talks and get on with the sense of community.

Ms. DELAURO. I thank the minority whip. I think that you are right. The public wants to see us every day continue to fight on their behalf. So we now have had 12 votes on trying to reopen this Government. We ought to have as many as necessary, and have one everyday if that is what it takes to reopen this Government. I thank you all for your comments and for your unbelievable work in this area.

Mr. WISE. If the gentlewoman would yield, if I could just take 2 minutes at the most to just mention what the impact on seniors is in my state. We have done some checking, and the fact that the Government is shut down, a partial shutdown, still affects senior citizens greatly. For instance, we have done some checking and find out that the thousands of black lung recipients, these are coal miners who have worked a minimum of 20 years, but most often 30 or 40 years in the coal mines, and have received a determination they are 100 percent disabled as a result of pneumococcus, black lung, coal dust in their lungs. They wake up choking every morning black dust. The Department of Labor will not be able to make full black lung payments after next month if this Government remains shut down in the present state it is in.

We have many workers, of course, who are retired railroad workers. The Railroad Retirement Board tells us that 2,700 retirees in our State will see a 64-percent reduction in their vested dual benefits as a result of this shutdown if it is not alleviated quickly.

Medicare vendors will be affected as well. These are people providing services that Medicare recipients depend upon. They will be affected in the payment of their bills.

We have heard a lot about how Meals on Wheels are not affected by this, some saying they have been out there and said in such an area the program will go indefinitely. That is only if the local government picks up the share. In West Virginia, Meals on Wheels at the Federal level will not be able to continue after January 15. Yes; the State can pick up the difference. The problem is our State, like every other State, is trying to anticipate the cuts that are coming eventually in Medicaid and the other programs that are so important, and there is no money to go around.

So whether it is black lung, whether it is railroad retirees, whether it is Social Security recipients, Medicare vendors, all nature of senior citizens, the programs attendant to them, the fact that this Government is shut down, through no fault of their own, means they will not be getting these services.

I might point out, referring to the debate that is taking place over what the budget should be over the next 7 years, this is because of the Republican leadership's failure to let this Government function. The Senate leadership has said it should function, Republicans and Democrats. Democrats in the House said it should function. We voted 12 times to do so. I urge the Republican leadership to take this burden off our seniors while there is still time and before people begin to feel the pain.

Ms. DELAURO. I thank the gentleman from West Virginia. I am delighted to recognize and have join in this conversation the gentleman from Louisiana [Mr. FIELDS].

Mr. FIELDS of Louisiana. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentlewoman for yielding. I want to commend her also for her hard work and enthusiasm and working for seniors and working for not only her constituents, but working for people all across this country. We certainly thank you for having this special order.

Let me also echo something that the gentleman from Virginia said. He talked about those people who are clothed with responsibility of regulating the Social Security have already stated that it will only need about $90 billion cut, yet Members of the other side of the aisle choose to cut it by somewhere in the neighborhood of $270 billion. So that goes to show you how far we are apart, not only Democrat-Republicans, but Republicans as relates to those individuals who are clothed with responsibility of even regulating these programs.

Also, I wanted to make mention of the fact that this is not the first time we have had a budget impasse. We have had budget impasses year after year after year. As a matter of fact, over the past 12 years, we have had 57 CR's, where we continue to operate the Government, and in the process of operating the Government we had budget negotiations. I just find it to be totally irresponsible. It is irresponsible for the Members on the other side of the aisle to hold working people in this country, Federal employees, hostage, while we try to do and complete the business of this country.

If you really look at it in the real sense, you will find it is our responsibility to run the Federal Government. We have tried, Members of this side of the aisle have tried time after time after time to try to pass CR's, to get the Government back moving, to get people back to work. We have even said listen, it is irresponsible of us as Members of Congress who are clothed with responsibility of running the Government, and half of the Government is not running, it is irresponsible of us to continue to receive pay.

So Members of this side of the aisle even went so far to say we are the last people who ought to be paid, because it is our responsibility, our fiduciary responsibility, to run this Government. If anybody should be affected by this closure, by these pay cuts, it should be us. But Members on the other side of the aisle chose not to do that.

I would hope there would be some agreement tonight in the Committee on Rules, and on tomorrow I would hope we could step on this floor and pass a CR and get this Government moving again.

The gentlewoman is right. You are talking about seniors. Seniors are affected by this. I receive calls everyday from my district. Ms. Bass, who works for the Social Security office in my district, in Louisiana, she calls every day. She had a very boring Christmas. These people live paycheck to paycheck. They do not have the luxury of having thousands upon thousands of dollars in the bank and in savings. Every nickel, every penny counts. And we ought to be ashamed of ourselves. It is all right to negotiate and it is all right to have an impasse as long as negotiations are taking place. But it is not all right to take bread off of working people's tables in this Nation.

Let me close by talking a little bit about Meals on Wheels. The gentleman who spoke before me is absolutely right. That program is affected. In my own state, they are running out of money, and January 15, the gentleman is right, the state will not have the money to subsidize this program. So a lot of seniors in my district will go without food.

These are real issues affecting real people. So I just wanted to thank the gentlewoman for taking this time and continue to fight, and I would hope that tonight some meaningful resolution will occur in the Committee on Rules and tomorrow we can get this government moving again and get people back to work.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman. I just want to make one point, that someone of our Republican colleagues today said on the floor that he did not hold the key to opening the Government and put the blame on the President.

Well, I would submit to my colleague and all my Republican colleagues that the voting card, which is what the people that voted us to these offices gave us, they gave us this ability, to use this card. You do not need a key, you do not need a magic bullet, you do not need anything else. You need to take this card and you need to vote ''aye'' to open this Government. That is what this is. That is what this is about.

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Mr. BONIOR. Mr. Speaker, the Members of this body will have the opportunity tomorrow to take a green card, to vote ''aye,'' and to open the Government completely. We will have that opportunity on the previous question on the rule. That will be the vote that will say to the American people who wants this Government closed and shut down and who wants it open; and who wants those services denied the American people, whether it is Head Start money, or whether it is contracting money for NASA projects, whether it is cleaning up our Superfund waste sites, all of these questions are going to be cloaked on whether a Member picks a red card or picks a green card.

That chance will occur tomorrow. We have a rule that will be coming out of the Committee on Rules very shortly on the floor and it will occur on the previous question on the rule. There are 12 Republican colleagues over here who have today said they want to support BOB DOLE, the majority leader in the Senate, in having a clean CR and putting this Government back to work and support the Democrats, and I urge the rest of them to join in doing that so we can get things back on track again.

Ms. DELAURO. We have 197 Democrats who are prepared to vote ''aye'' to open this Government. We need 20 good Republicans to do that.

I now would like to yield time to my colleague from New York, MAJOR OWENS, who has been a champion on education and other areas, and particularly on seniors.

Mr. OWENS. Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to thank my colleague from Connecticut for this special order and focus particularly on senior citizens.

Senior citizens in New York, senior citizens in my district, certainly are experiencing an atmosphere of terror. No matter how many times we reassure them that their Social Security checks will not be affected by the shutdown; the fact that the shutdown involves the Department of Health and Human Services, the fact that Donna Shalala has been on television talking about the kinds of things that have been happening, even though she reassures people it will not affect their Social Security checks, we keep getting the calls about the Social Security checks.

New York, of course, has to bear the burden of a mean-spirited and extreme approach at three levels. Not only do we have a shutdown in Washington, but we have a mean-spirited approach in Albany, where the Governor is trying to get ahead of the Republicans here in Congress and has started imposing new rules on nursing homes already. And a mayor who is also in sync with the cuts of Medicare and Medicaid. They are applauding.

So when we have a mayor and Governor and we have a shutdown in Washington, they live in a state of mental terror. Nobody is going to do them physical harm, and probably New York State and New York City, they are big enough to borrow the money to keep the Meals on Wheels program going and any other program going, but the state of terror is such that some people are going to have their lives shortened just from worrying themselves to death.

They are worried because the mayor has said he wants to sell hospitals. And when he cannot get buyers for the hospitals, now he is willing to lease hospitals. Recently the Governor announced he is going to close down one of the largest psychiatric centers, Kingsboro Psychiatric Center, in my district. It is a large hospital, located in a big hospital center, so people think he is going to close down Kings County Hospital, which is the biggest municipal hospital in the city.

The rumors generate and people are very much frightened when they hear Medicaid being thrown into the hopper. And if there is no Medicaid entitlement, that means they are not guaranteed nursing homes. New York State has one of the biggest Medicaid and Medicare programs in the country, and they hear on television our State being criticized for being so generous. I am not so sure we are too generous. We have some very good programs and take very good care of senior citizens. With all the generosity with respect to health care, New York State still sends to the Federal Government $18 billion more. In 1994 we sent $18 billion more to the Federal Government than we got back. Before that it was $23 billion.

And for the last 20 years New York State has sent more money to the Federal Government than it has gotten back.

There are a whole wealth of States in the South and Southwest that have gotten $65 billion more in 1994 than they paid to the Federal Government, but we consistently pay more into the Federal Government than we get back. So Medicare, Medicaid, that is one of the ways our citizens get back some of their tax money.

People are terrified with the thought that all this is going to change. Because if Medicaid is no longer an entitlement, then two-thirds of our Medicaid money, which goes for nursing homes, is up for grabs. And I think this kind of special order helps to reassure them that at least Democrats here are fighting. This is a profound debate. It is also a desperate debate. We are desperately fighting to protect some very profound and concrete benefits for people who need them, and I thank the gentlewoman very much for this opportunity.

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the gentleman and just say what a number of my colleagues have said, that, in fact, this is worth the fight; that there are fundamental differences about the values of this Nation and its priorities and whether we stand for Medicare and Medicaid and education and the environment and for working class families in this country, or we stand for a $245 billion tax break for the wealthiest Americans.

Let me tell my colleagues that Speaker GINGRICH, since last April, has made statements about shutting down this Government. In June, he said,

> We are going to go over to the liberal Democratic part of the Government and then say to them we could last 60 days, 90 days, 120 days, 5 years, a century. There is a lot of stuff we don't care if it is ever funded. I don't care what the price is. I don't care if we have no executive offices and no bonds for 30 days. Not this time.

That was in September. The fact of the matter is he has been fanning, inflaming, and planning for a shutdown. We have a shutdown, with unbelievable desperate effects on senior citizens in this country. We sill have an opportunity to vote tomorrow with our voting card to vote ''aye'' to reopen this Government. We need 20 Republicans who will, in fact, follow the lead of their districts and the people who sent them here to serve them rather than following their allegiance to NEWT GINGRICH.

That is what this is about, and the desperate effects that this shutdown has on seniors in our communities and veterans in our communities. Do not be fooled by the rhetoric of a balanced budget. It is balanced and it helps the richest people in this country and hurts seniors and veterans and students and working families.

I want to yield now to my colleague from New Jersey, Mr. PALLONE.

Mr. PALLONE. I just wanted to say that I am really pleased that the gentlewoman from Connecticut stresses the basic differences that there are here on this budget and how this is really a budget battle that concerns major differences on the issues of Medicare and Medicaid, education, and the environment.

I am so afraid that the public, in some ways, has got a distorted impression of why we feel that it is incumbent to bring up a continuing resolution to open up the Government again. Historically, in this House and in the Congress, when there have been differences over appropriations bills, differences over the budget, everyone has agreed to continue the Government, let it operate while those negotiations go on. That is all we are asking. We want the Government open while these budget negotiations go on. And I think there is a responsibility of the Republican majority to do that.

Ms. DELAURO. This argument is directed at a Democratic President.

DEBATE IS ABOUT WHETHER THE WHITE HOUSE AND CONGRESS ARE IN AGREEMENT OVER BALANCING THE BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. METCALF). Under the Speaker's announced policy of May 12, 1995, the gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. SHAYS] is recognized for 55 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I understand I have 55 minutes and the gentleman from New York [Mr. OWENS], the gentleman after me, has 55 minutes?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. That is true.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to be joined by the gentleman from Iowa [Mr. GANSKE].

Mr. Speaker, I was elected to the State House of Representatives in 1974, and it never ceased to amaze me, when I saw my colleagues in Congress having to form a budget, that they did not have to balance the budget. It never ceased to amaze me that unlike the State house, where our revenues had to equal expenditures, men and women in Congress continued to deficit spend and put us in an incredible hole of obligations.

Mr. Rabin, before he was assassinated, said that he was elected by adults to represent the children and the children's children. And this is what this issue is all about. We have Federal employees who are innocent victims, but, ultimately, they will be paid. But they have to now survive without pay. They are caught in the middle.

But this is not about Federal employees. This is not even about the disruption of services. It is about whether or not there is an agreement in Congress with the White House to finally balance our Federal budget, get our financial house in order, Save Medicare from bankruptcy and, ultimately, to change this social and corporate welfare State into what I would refer to as an opportunity society, an opportunity for all Americans.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are gathered here now in a very significant debate. I have differences with my colleagues on the other side, as I am sure others of my colleagues on this side of the aisle have. We are trying to get our financial house in order and balance our Federal budget.

We presented a budget that we worked on for 11 months. Our budget, in some cases with discretionary spending, which is the running of Government, the various departments and agencies, we made real reductions. We spent less in some programs and departments than we did in this year's budget.

We eliminate a department, we reduce the size of other departments, we consolidate agencies, and we attempt to, in a 7-year plan, balance the Federal budget.

In terms of entitlements, which are half of our Federal budget, we are looking to slow the growth of entitlements. We are not cutting them; we are spending more. I am just going to read the expenditures of five programs that our colleagues just previously made reference to. They called it cuts. Only in this place, in this city of Washington, when you spend so much more do people call it a cut.

The earned income tax credit is a credit that goes to people who do not pay taxes. It is an assistance to the working poor, and we are told that we are cutting it when we go from $19.9 billion to $25 billion in the 7th year. That is an increase of 20 percent, and yet our colleagues call it a cut.

The School Lunch Program, which they went to schools and told the children they would no longer have a school lunch program. What an outrage. That program goes from $5.1 billion to $6.8 billion.

Our Student Loan Program, we are told we are cutting the Student Loan Program, and it goes from $24.5 billion to $36.4 million, a 50-percent increase in student loans. Only in Washington when you spend 50 percent more do people call it a cut.

And then, before yielding to my colleague, the gentleman from Iowa [Mr. GANSKE], I will just make reference to two very important programs, I know to Mr. GANSKE, and certainly to me as well, because we worked on these programs very closely. Medicaid. This is health care for the poor. We go from $89 billion now to $127 billion. Only in Washington when you go from $89 billion to $127 billion do people call it a cut.

And then with Medicare, we go from $178 billion to $289 billion. I would love to just make reference to some very specific points in this program. The bottom line to this program is that when we talk about it, we are going to go on a per capita basis from $4,800, in this past year, to $7,100 in the year 2002, which is now 6 years from now.