in reimbursements. For nearly 40 years, Medicare has provided necessary health care to millions of patients across this country. Another steep cut in reimbursement rates is now forcing many physicians who provide for Medicare patients to make difficult choices.

We only need to look at this chart, compare in 2004 Medicare payment for the various types of Medicare providers to understand the physicians' plight. Reimbursements for outpatient services up 3.8 percent. Inpatient services up 3.4 percent. Payment for inpatient rehabilitation up 3.2 percent. Likewise, payments to skilled nursing facilities up 3 percent. Then we come to our physicians, down 4.2 percent.

Interestingly, payments to all of these other providers are going up and payments to physicians are getting cut again.

Opponents to increase funding for physicians' payments often cite the high participation level in the Medicare program as evidence that physician reimbursement rates are at least adequate. True, most surgeons and doctors continue to treat some Medicare patients even as rates continue to fall. It is difficult for physicians to sever long-standing relationships with their patients. Having practiced OB–GYN for 27 years, I can tell you that the bond between doctor and patient is truly unique. It is a difficult relationship to be forced to end.

On the other hand, I would invite you to take a look at the number of physicians accepting new Medicare patients into their practices. As more and more doctors curtail the time they devote to Medicare patients, seniors and disabled patients will wait even longer to visit a specialist. Moreover, they will struggle to find physicians available for referrals for follow-up chronic care.

The problem associated with decreasing reimbursements is especially acute within the surgical community. The number of physicians who elect to practice surgery is going down. Many variables enter into a medical student's choice of speciality. Among these factors is the viability of maintaining a practice. As reimbursements decline, so too do the number of applicants wishing to pursue surgery. Never are the consequences more dire than for trauma patients in underserved areas. The inability to sufficiently staff hospitals in emergency situations is one of the ripple effects of cutting physician reimbursements.

One of the greatest achievements of the Medicare program is the access to high-quality care it has brought to the Nation's senior and disabled patients. This level of access cannot be expected to continue uninterrupted in the face of continued Medicare cuts and ballooning liability premiums.

Mr. Speaker, we must stop, we must stop the 4.2 percent Medicare physician payment cut. Help our doctors help those who need care the most. Mr. Speaker, we must not forget, we must never forget that doctors are the linchpin of the Medicare program. It will do no good to provide a prescription benefit for our seniors, a $400 billion plan, which I am very much in favor of, if we have no physicians willing to accept Medicare patients and write those prescriptions because of these continued Medicare payment cuts.

FISCAL NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GREEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, last week the Federal Government ushered in a new fiscal year. And as is typical with the start of the new year, we look back at the last year and examine our problems and resolve to conduct ourselves in a more prudent manner. Unfortunately, last year was witness to a long list of physical indulgences, that have wreaked havoc on our economy to the tune of a $400 billion deficit.

The administration will tell you that this deficit is temporary. We all know that these tax cuts raise the deficit, but they will tell you that the tax cuts will actually stimulate the economy enough to grow out of our deficit problems. Unfortunately, the numbers just do not add up.

From 2001 to 2006 the average American will receive about $3,593 in tax cuts. That seems like a pretty good chunk of change until we realize that these tax cuts increased our individual share of the national debt by $13,000 in the same period. Any of my wife's former algebra students could tell you that it is not a good deal to get $3,600 and in return and have to pay $13,000. To put it another way, for each dollar we receive in tax cuts, our government is forced to borrow $3.60 to finance them and pay for other government operations.

That is right. Other government operations, including the war on terrorism, including everything else we have, an economy that is not growing. We hear we are in recovery, but it is a jobless recovery. If you are unemployed, it is not a recovery.

Nearly one quarter of our deficit is going to finance tax cuts, and I ask my colleagues, for what? Now, I know that not all deficits can be considered indulgent. Running a deficit can actually help the economy when it pays for job growth during an economic slump or even in times of expansion, deficits may be needed to fund education or research that will contribute to future economic growth. But these tax cuts, Mr. Speaker, were excessive, and they are contributing only to the ballooning deficit that is weighing our country down.

It just does not make economic sense to try to stimulate the economy through tax cuts geared toward the wealthy who are just going to save that extra money. The money simply does not get into our economy. And to make matters worse, instead of stimulating our economy, these tax cuts are increasing the deficit that is going to start worrying investors.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have to tell you that it is bad news when investors begin to worry. Interest rates go up, consumer spending slows, and then we are in worse shape than we found ourselves before. All the tax cuts have done is fatten the pockets of those who need it the least.

Let us take the dividend tax cut as an example. This tax cut was designed to encourage companies to increase investor dividends. Theoretically, investors would either spend the dividends or reinvest them, either option will stimulate the economy. So after the dividend tax cut was passed, City Group raised its dividend 75 percent to $1.40. That is $140 a year for average investor holding 100 shares of City Group stock.

But for Sandy Weill, the CEO of City Group, that is a whopping $27 million that he will bring in annually; $27 million, $16 million more than he received last year without the dividend tax cut. Of course, if you take the richest man in the world, Bill Gates, the numbers start soaring.

Microsoft recently began offering a dividend of 8 cents per share. If you own 100 shares of Microsoft, you get an extra $8 this year. With that you can buy yourself a pretty good cheeseburger and fries in Houston, but what does Bill Gates get? He gets $82 million.

Mr. Speaker, where are our priorities. We have pressing physical needs in our country. We cannot afford to provide adequate prescription drugs for our seniors. We cannot afford to rebuild our damaged bridges and highways. According to the Defense Department, we can afford to bring our troops home for a well-deserved rest and recuperation, but we cannot afford to fly them from their point of arrival in the U.S. to their hometowns.

Over the past 3 years, we have had more than 3 million people out of work desperately looking for jobs. Yet, the central tenets of this administration's job creation program is to make tax cuts permanent, reduce government regulation, and allow companies to contribute less to their pension plans.

Moreover, this administration wants to continue the free trade policies that have, without a doubt, caused undue harm on American workers. To me this plan seems more likely to produce job insecurity than job security.

Mr. Speaker, in 3 straight years, we have had three consecutive tax cuts. These tax cuts have led to the dramatic decrease in jobs and an inconceivable increase in the debt. If tax cuts help an economy, why are we not doing so in Iraq in considering $87 billion on top of the $79 billion from last spring.

I thought a stimulus was supposed to work the other way around. Is it not supposed to increase jobs and decrease

the debt? Yet, every American knows that when your Visa bill gets too high, you are starting to indulge in too many things you cannot afford. To the average American family, getting a hold on our finances means making priorities and tough decisions. Yet, no family forced to cut back on spending would neglect to feed their children in order to pay for a Las Vegas vacation.

Similarly, we should not be cutting crucial government services to pay for an inflated tax cut.

Mr. Speaker, as we enter this new fiscal year, I hope my colleagues will learn from the fiscal follies of the past. And I hope we can collectively make a New Year's resolution to put the Federal Government's priorities in order, tighten our belts, and get our fiscal houses in order for the sake of our country, but more importantly, for the American people.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. PENCE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING MILLIE O'NEILL

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

Mr. FRANK. Mr. Speaker, sometimes the cliches come true. I thought about that when I got a phone call last night telling me the death of Millie O'Neill. I was profoundly sorry.

She was an extraordinary woman of warmth and strength and humor, a genuine believer in and participant in this American political system through the real partnership she had with her husband, the late Speaker Tip O'Neill.

All of the cliches we summon up about the partnership of marriage, about a woman who could combine toughness when it was appropriate with gentleness at other times, all of those Millie O'Neill exemplified.

I had a great privilege when I came here in 1981 as a Member of the House from Massachusetts. I became, particularly as a Massachusetts Member, but not only those of us from Massachusetts, a member of that extended family that the O'Neills presided over. I had known other members, Tom O'Neill, the oldest son who was a legislative classmate of myself, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MARKEY), the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. DELAHUNT), and a former member, Mr. Donnelly, we were all elected to the legislature that same year, and so we came to know each other then.

I got to know over the over the years other members of that family, the O'Neills' son, Kip, the daughters, Susan and Rosemary, the son, Michael, who sadly passed away a few years ago. And I interacted with them and did a lot of work together with them.

Millie O'Neill was not always a presence here. She came down when her husband became the Speaker, but once she did, she became a vital part of this city. I was privileged as a Massachusetts Member from time to time to be at the events where we were celebrating any number of holidays or other important political functions. Sometimes you go to those things reluctantly. Sometimes you finish a day here and just want to go home. But, Mr. Speaker, when you knew that Tip and Millie O'Neill were going to be at an event, then you wanted to go because you knew it would be suffused with laughter and warmth and all of the best things about people coming together. Because separately Millie O'Neill and Tip O'Neill were wonderful people of strength and of great commitment; together there was a synergy. They brought out in each other the best of the best.

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They enjoyed each other's company, and they made it impossible to be in their company and not to share in that enjoyment.

When we mourn, Mr. Speaker, we mourn for the person who has passed away. We mourn also for ourselves. We mourn for our lost memories, for the good times we once had and will not have again; and as I said when I learned of the death of Millie O'Neill, I was profoundly saddened by the passing of that wonderful woman, and I was also saddened myself to realize that never again would I be in her company, never again would I be one of the beneficiaries of what she radiated.

So, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the chance to come say to Tom and Kip and Rosemary and Susan how sorry I am; but I am confident that very soon, having had the privilege to be the children of that wonderful woman, that the very, very good memories of their mother, just as they have of their father, will crowd out the pain.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on this Special Order in commemoration of Millie O'Neill.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MURPHY). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. NEAL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. NEAL of Massachusetts addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. TIERNEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. TIERNEY addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. LYNCH) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. LYNCH addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

TRIBUTE TO MILLIE O'NEILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Wisconsin (Mr. OBEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. OBEY. Mr. Speaker, Millie and Tip O'Neill were members of the Studs Terkel generation. They were Democrats because they saw the Democratic Party as a vehicle to help the common people of this country. They were Democrats who accepted human nature. They did not try to change people. They simply tried to appeal to their better natures. They just did not appeal to their common sense. They appealed to their sense of common justice.

Millie loved her man. She knew her man. She knew he was a strong man, but she also knew that he could be even stronger buttressed by love, and she gave of it fully. Millie would make every congressional spouse feel like she or he were welcome as family. They were two strong and good people who made their community and their country better for everybody.

In my view, Tip O'Neill's finest hour as a defender of this institution outside of the Watergate era came on a day after the regular order of business was done, just like today. Only in those days, during this period known as Special Order, the camera did not pan the Chamber. The camera simply focused closely on the person speaking in the well; and on one famous occasion, a young Newt Gingrich, later to become Speaker, took the well of the House and began a speech attacking Members on this side of the aisle, and with the camera close upon him, he challenged Members who were not there, but the camera gave the appearance that the Chamber was full. Mr. Gingrich challenged Members in an empty Chamber to answer him if his allegations were wrong.

Tip felt that that was a fundamental misleading of the American people. So he rushed to the House floor and told Mr. Gingrich what he thought of that kind of conduct. In my view, what he said may have been a technical violation of the rules; but in my view and in Millie's view, it should not have been, because in Tip's view and in her view and in the views of many of us, we thought that what Tip was saying was