

To begin with, the Republican proposal would add to the program's cost. Privatizing Medicare would cost 11 percent more than it would for providing exactly the same services under the current Medicare plan. And the additional cost for going private would just widen over time.

According to the nonpartisan politifact.org, under the Republican plan, those just becoming eligible for Medicare, those 55 years old and under 10 years from now, would have to pay a whopping \$6,400 more per year than they would under the current plan.

This kind of foreseeable increase in costs actually works just like a tax aimed squarely at our retiring seniors. The Republican plan would be a disaster for our seniors and our economy.

OUR NATION DESERVES BETTER

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

Mr. DEUTCH. Madam Speaker, today we will vote on a bill to deprive impoverished mothers and their children of nutritional assistance at a time when record numbers of Americans are unfortunately relying on these programs.

There is no better indication of the majority's misplaced priorities than when you examine their cuts to meals for low-income seniors and the cuts to our Nation's emergency food banks. My Republican colleagues love to say that these painful cuts are necessary to reduce the deficit. Don't believe it for a second. If we repeal the Bush tax cuts for millionaires for 1 day, just for 1 day, we could preserve every penny of the \$100 million in cuts to senior food, aid senior hungry and soup kitchens.

We're recovering from the worst economic disaster since the Great Depression. Poverty is on the rise across America. During these tough times, we could ask millionaires to go without their special tax cuts for 1 day. Instead, Republicans are asking some of America's poorest, most vulnerable seniors to go hungry for 1 day and more.

Madam Speaker, our Nation deserves better than that.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on H.R. 2112.

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

There was no objection.

AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2012

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to House Resolution 300 and rule

XVIII, the Chair declares the House in the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill, H.R. 2112.

□ 0917

IN THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Accordingly, the House resolved itself into the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union for the further consideration of the bill (H.R. 2112) making appropriations for Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies programs for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes, with Mrs. MILLER of Michigan in the chair.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The CHAIR. When the Committee of the Whole rose earlier today, a request for a recorded vote on the amendment offered by the gentlewoman from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) had been postponed, and the bill had been read through page 80, line 2.

AMENDMENT NO. 38 OFFERED BY MR. HOLDEN

Mr. HOLDEN. Madam Chair, I have an amendment at the desk.

The CHAIR. The Clerk will designate the amendment.

The text of the amendment is as follows:

At the end of the bill (before the short title), insert the following new section:

SEC. ____ . Each amount made available by this Act (other than an amount required to be made available by a provision of law) is hereby reduced by 5.88 percent and may not be used to carry out the limitations contained in paragraphs (1) through (8) of section 728.

The CHAIR. The gentleman from Pennsylvania is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HOLDEN. Madam Chair, what my amendment will do is restore the \$1 billion in cuts to mandatory conservation programs in the underlying bill. Almost half of the total cuts in this piece of legislation come from mandatory conservation programs. That's the largest cut in history.

Madam Chair, specifically in this bill there are \$210 million in cuts in the Conservation Steward Program; \$350 million in cuts in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program; \$50 million in cuts in Farmland Protection Program; 96,000 acres reduced in the Grassland Reserve Program; 64,200 acres reduced in the Wetland Reserve Program; and \$35 million of reductions in Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.

Madam Chair, to make this budget-neutral as it is scored by the CBO, it is paid for with a 5.88 percent across-the-board cut in discretionary spending in the bill, including the \$102 million already reduced in discretionary conservation programs in the bill.

Madam Chair, this is shared sacrifice as opposed to not shared sacrifice in the overwhelming, significant reduction of \$1 billion in mandatory discretionary programs.

Madam Chair, in the farm bill we worked very hard in a bipartisan man-

ner to get the investment in conservation that our producers need all across the country, and they need it now more than ever as they are under significant danger and peril from regulatory agencies, particularly the EPA. They need these conservation programs so they can stay in compliance and they can do the job that they do so well in producing our agriculture all across the country.

□ 0920

This is a bipartisan bill. I am honored to be the ranking member on the Conservation Subcommittee and to be joined by the chairman of the subcommittee, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON). And I urge adoption of the amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Madam Chair, I move to strike the last word.

The CHAIR. The gentleman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Madam Chair, as chairman of the House Agriculture Committee's Subcommittee on Conservation, Energy, and Forestry, I rise in strong support of this amendment offered by my friend from Pennsylvania and ranking member on the subcommittee, Mr. HOLDEN.

This amendment will restore limited mandatory funding for the conservation programs as defined under the current farm bill. I believe it's important to note that this amendment does not have any additional cost. We're still within the frame of the Appropriations Committee's allocation for the bill.

This amendment simply preserves critical conservation programs which remain important for many farms, ranches, and agricultural lands across the Nation in order to protect environmentally sensitive areas. The programs offer voluntary incentives for farmers and ranchers to enroll land into conservation areas. In my district, these programs are vital for water quality improvement on our local farms and throughout the region. And it's the same for many other States. In my area of Pennsylvania, this is vital to be able to deal with the mandates levied upon us by agencies such as the EPA. The programs are cost-effective and provide excellent returns on investment while utilizing local, State, and private funding so that everyone involved has skin in the game.

The amendment, again, does not increase the bill's cost by even one penny because it's fully offset by reducing the bill's discretionary funding by 5.88 percent. I commend the Appropriations subcommittee chair for his efforts to produce an overall bill that is fiscally responsible and reduces funding in total by 13 percent in comparison to previous fiscal years.

And as the chairman of the subcommittee with jurisdiction over these programs, I can say very frankly to my good friend from Georgia, I look forward to the next farm bill where the