

strongly urge my colleagues to come together to use the budget surpluses to protect both Social Security and Medicare for future generations. Both of these programs are success stories for the American people.

Prior to Social Security, over half of our retirees were in poverty in this country. Now, it is less than 10 percent. Medicare is the same success story, providing health care to millions of retirees and disabled across the country.

If we cannot dedicate the majority of the surpluses to both of these important investments for our retirees when we have a surplus, if we cannot pay down the debt when we have a surplus, when will we do it?

Putting dollars into Social Security and Medicare and paying down the debt is the right thing to do at this time, and I hope we will come together when we can. Now that we have a robust economy, we have the opportunity, with budget surpluses, to pay down the debt through paying back Social Security and Medicare. We need to do that first before we proceed with anything else.

DIFFERENCE OF OPINION ON RETIREMENT SECURITY

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

Mr. BALLENGER. Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a fundamental difference of opinion between the Democrats and the Republicans on the issue of retirement security.

Just this past weekend a distinguished Member of the other body mentioned repeatedly that his father would not have known how to invest for his own retirement. He needed the government to do it for him. That same government that every few years tells us proudly they have fixed Social Security, only to discover that it is going bankrupt again.

Mr. Speaker, the approximately 43 million Americans who own a mutual fund or retirement money invested in the stock market must really think that liberal Democrats take the Americans for fools. Or they might be laughing their way to the bank at the silliness of all these Washington-knows-best liberals who have so little faith in the ability of grown-ups to manage their own affairs that they are scandalized by the very idea that the average American ought to take advantage of the market prosperity, too.

While the liberal elites get rich and talk about their 401(k) plans at cocktail parties, they would deny the same opportunity to ordinary Americans who have to rely on a retirement system that has gone bankrupt. What arrogance.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE MUST WITHSTAND CRUSH OF BABY BOOMER RETIREMENTS

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

Mr. BLAGOJEVICH. Mr. Speaker, when Franklin Roosevelt established Social Security more than six decades ago, he did it over the strong objections of Republicans here in Congress. Thirty years later, when Lyndon Johnson established Medicare, he faced similar opposition in this very Chamber. Both of these programs have been a big success. But it is funny how history has a way of repeating itself.

Our Nation faces an enormous challenge in ensuring that Social Security and Medicare can withstand the crush of baby boomer retirements. That is why Democrats want to reserve nearly 80 percent of the budget surplus to strengthen Social Security and Medicare.

Now, the Republicans also claim they want to use the budget surplus to save Social Security, but their numbers just do not add up. Their plan would divert money from the trust fund for tax cuts that disproportionately benefit the wealthy. And, even worse, their plan does not reserve a single penny of the surplus for Medicare.

Mr. Speaker, Democrats were right about Social Security in 1935, we were right about Medicare in 1965, and we are right in 1999 about putting Social Security and Medicare first.

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REPUBLICANS ARE AWAITING PRESIDENT'S LEGISLATIVE PRO- POSAL ON SAVING SOCIAL SECUR- ITY

(Mrs. CUBIN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. CUBIN. Mr. Speaker, the President has talked about saving Social Security many times since his State of the Union last month. We Republicans stand ready to work with him on this issue.

Although his proposal does contain a number of serious flaws, such as double counting over \$2 trillion and a foolish idea about how Uncle Sam should be the biggest investor in the stock market, we believe that there does exist some common ground on which both Republicans and Democrats can agree. But now is the time for the President to produce a legislative proposal, to move from rhetoric and concepts and ideas into actual legislation something that we can act on, something that will be set on the table so that we have a base on which to place our actions. His proposal in vague, broad terms needs to be introduced into this body in detail.

We share a common goal of strengthening Social Security, preserving the

safety net, and giving younger workers more freedom to provide for their retirement needs. So let us get to work. Republicans are standing by waiting for the President's proposal.

LET US MEET IN THE CENTER

(Ms. WOOLSEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, we have been hearing for the last 4 months that the majority party wants to meet the Democrats in the center; they want to come together and work with us and meet us in the middle.

Well, I am telling my colleagues the middle does not start in the center and go to the right. The middle is the center between the left and the right. And meeting in the middle means that the Republicans would meet with Democrats, for starters, to invest our surplus and reduce our national debt by putting that surplus in Social Security and Medicare and not indulging in reckless tax cuts.

Let us think big. Let us really think in the center. Let us think for the majority of the people of this country. Let us look at the budget surplus, the future of our Nation, reducing our national debt, and protecting our children and their children and a safety net for Social Security and Medicare.

HONORING IRVING DILLARD'S 94TH BIRTHDAY

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

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, on December 5, the residents of Collinsville, Illinois, had a celebration honoring Irving Dillard's 94th birthday. Although he was born and raised in Collinsville, his service to society does not stop at the Collinsville town border.

As a patriotic American, Irving Dillard first served in the U.S. Federal administration and in the Army during World War II. It is for this distinguished service that he received American, French, and British war decorations.

He also wrote for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch from the Great Depression to the Eisenhower presidency, where he is most noted for his speech regarding the advancement of civil rights and the protection of the Constitution. In fact, Justice William O. Douglas acknowledged him as "the one journalist who stood head and shoulders above all others when it came to the work of the Supreme Court."

After his distinguished career, he also lectured in Europe and spent a decade teaching journalism at Princeton University.

Despite his many worldly accomplishments, Mr. Dillard still considers