PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Will the gentleman from Texas, Mr. GENE GREEN, yield for the purpose of a parliamentary inquiry?

It does count against his time. Will the gentleman yield for the purpose of a parliamentary inquiry?

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, we need to go ahead and go forward with it because I have 5 minutes on Medicare, and it is a concern. I would be more than happy to sit back down, if the Speaker would like to recognize a Member from the other side because I think the objection has been withdrawn.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent the gentleman yield back his time without having it charged against him in the name of decorum so we can go back and forth.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the special order of the gentleman from Texas, Mr. GENE GREEN, is vacated without prejudice.

There was no objection.

REPUBLICAN MEDICARE REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida [Mr. MILLER] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is an historic day. It is exciting, the plan that we are going to present on Medicare tomorrow. I am proud of the plan that we are going to present to the American people tomorrow and we will vote and pass it tomorrow. And all we are hearing from the other side is fear and scare tactics. That is sad.

For the seniors of this country, it is one of the most important issues we are facing, and all we are hearing is scare tactics and fear and, oh, my gosh, the sky is falling, the Chicken Little story. This is not the case. We have a good plan with which we all agree on so many things.

There are a lot of things we agree with on this plan. We agree, for example, that Medicare is so important that we have to do something to save it. We agree that it is going bankrupt. It is the Clinton trustees that say it is going bankrupt. We agree that next year for the first time in the history of the plan, less money is coming in than is going out. And in 7 years, the total fund is bankrupt, the part A fund. So there is no disputing that fact. We agree there.

We should agree that we do not want a Band-Aid approach, that we really want to fix the problem because the problem gets really bad in the year 2010 when the baby boomers come along. In year 2010, which is 65 years after World War II, is when the whole thing explodes. And all we are going to do is a Band-Aid approach and putting it off to another day, a major problem when the rest of us start retiring.

I think we should agree that we need to fix the plan and start working on the baby boomer problem. And we should agree on choice. What is wrong with choice? As a Federal employee, all Federal employees have a choice of plans. And all they are doing over there is to ridicule the idea that seniors should have a right to choose. I have a right to choose. Every Member has a right to choose. Every member of the Department of Commerce has a right to choose. Everybody in the Department of Agriculture has a right to choose. Why should not seniors have a right to choose?

Not only do they have a right to choose, they get to stay in the plan they are in right now. They do not have to leave that plan. They keep that plan. But why not let them have a choice? If they want to choose the medical savings account, that is their right to choose. Nothing wrong with that. Why ridicule the idea that some seniors may want a medical savings account?

Why not allow local hospitals and local doctors to go together to form their own plan? Why not allow them, give a choice. Health care is a local issue. Why not allow the groups to work together?

Why not allow HMOs and managed care programs to be offered to seniors. I do not have them in my area very much. What is wrong with giving them the right to choose? Why fight the right to choose idea? It makes no sense.

Our plan has tough waste, fraud and abuse. Who can disagree with fighting waste, fraud and abuse? They cannot get mad at us that we are not increasing copayments and we are not increasing deductibles. What is wrong with that? You have to agree with us on that.

All they want to do is start these scare tactics. They say, we are cutting Medicare by $270 billion. Let us get the facts straight.

The next 7 years we are going to spend $354 billion more than we spent the last 7 years, $354 billion more than the next 7 years than the last 7 years. Let us divide that up by the number of people on Medicare. We are spending $4,800 per person on Medicare today. We are spending $6,700 per person on Medicare in 7 years. Now, to me it does not take remedial math, it does not take a Ph.D. in statistics to understand that going from $4,800 to $6,700 is an increase. It is not a cut. We are increasing spending by $354 billion over 7 years.

Where does this idea of getting beat up on the cut come from? That is fear tactics; that is trying to scare the seniors. And that is wrong.

And then we start talking about tax cuts. What is wrong with the tax cut? It is a totally separate issue. What happens if we have no tax cuts? We get rid of all the tax cuts? What happens to Medicare? It is bankrupt in 7 years. It has no impact on it.

Medicare part A is a trust fund. The only money going in is a payroll tax and the only money going out is to pay for part A. So it has nothing to do with income taxes. So if we have no tax cut at all, it still goes bankrupt. So that is a phony issue.

Let us debate the tax cut on its own merits. And it really is a tax cut for working families in this country.

Now we talk about the hearings. We have had 38 hearings and we have listened to the American people.

I think in 5 years we are going to reflect back and say, we made a great decision tomorrow to reform Medicare.

MORE ON MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, and without objection, the gentleman from Texas, Mr. GENE GREEN, is recognized for 5 minutes.

There was no objection.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, let me answer my colleague's concern about the right to choose. Seniors have the best right to choose today. They can choose whatever doctor and hospital they want to. But under the plan that is going to pass tomorrow they will not have that right because they will be priced out of the market.

The cuts we have talked about. They discussed the cuts. Well, it is a cut because, if we have a growing senior population by the year 2002, and they are saying, they do not grow as fast with the improvements in that plan, then we are going to diminish the ability of seniors to be able to have access to health care.

That is what they cannot explain. Let us get down to the basics though. We will vote on a $270 billion slowing of the growth for the year 2002 to pay for a $245 billion tax cut. I have heard this for months that we paid for that in the spring. We have not paid for anything since the spring. There has not been one appropriations bill passed here. The one that passed was vetoed by the President. They are going to use $245 billion over the next 7 years to balance off the cuts in Medicare growth, because there are seniors who are going to grow into it.

My dad is 80 years old. He is the growth in Medicare because he is going to need it next year. I hope he needs it in 2002. But they are not planning for it because they want to pay for a tax cut now to pay for political promises. On Monday I visited a senior citizens center in Jacinto City, TX, just outside of Houston. I was presented over 5,000 petitions that I left here this morning on the House floor from senior citizens, working families across my district. This signed their names because they are very concerned about the broad and extreme cuts that the Republicans are talking about that we are going to vote on tomorrow.

The cuts, $270 billion, in it only fixes Medicare to the year 2006. Up until last