

I was also concerned, Mr. Speaker, because of the cuts that are proposed in Medicare and Medicaid. I have great problems in the Republican budget with the assumption of balanced billing. In other words, a senior citizen may now be charged more by the provider and the senior will be billed directly for that, as opposed to the senior paying out of pocket being limited, as is presently the law.

I am concerned about the cuts in Medicaid, because I think what that is going to mean is that it will go to the States in a block grant, but not satisfactorily enough to meet the needs. At the same time the needs will expand, the funds will decrease.

Those are a lot of the reasons, Mr. Speaker, that I voted against the Republican budget but for the coalition and President's budget. I have heard a lot of talk, Mr. Speaker, about the need to, and certainly we all agree that there is a need to make sure that our young people are not burdened by debt. At the same time, there is also a compelling need to make sure they are not burdened by ignorance through lack of educational opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, there is a compelling need to make sure that our young people are not burdened by lack of opportunity because we are not investing in our economy. There is a compelling need to make sure that our young people are not burdened by the problems of crime because we are not investing adequately enough in crime control and putting police officers on the street. There is a compelling need to make sure that our young people have a future, and you have to invest in order to make that future.

So I have thought that the two budgets that I did vote for balanced the budget over 6 years, what they did was to seek to keep those domestic investments up and growing, and at the same time, to reach that goal of a balanced budget within a 6-year period.

One concern I have, Mr. Speaker, is that none of these budgets adequately addresses the need of domestic infrastructure investment, that none of these budgets addresses the need to increase the growth rate in this country. The problem is that, if you accept the growth rate in any of the budgets, Republican or Democrat, and say that that is all we are going to grow, that is a ticket to economic stagnation over a period of time.

However, having said that, certainly the coalition budget and the President's budget, I felt, certainly offered much more satisfactory blueprints for the future than the Republican leadership budget. So I offer that as my explanation of why I voted the way I did, and why I am going to keep pressing for domestic investment so that our economy can grow.

The SPEAKER pro tempore [Mr. DICKEY]. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina [Mr. JONES] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. JONES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

ALLOCATION OF SPECIAL ORDER TIME

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that I take the gentleman's place.

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

There was no objection.

LET'S SAVE MEDICARE

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

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to discuss one of the most important issues facing my constituents in east-central Florida.

It is an undisputed fact that Medicare is running out of money and will be bankrupt in just 5 years.

For me, this is not a partisan issue. This is a personal issue. I am a doctor and my patients depend on Medicare. I have a father who is dependent on Medicare.

I know the value of this program for my patients and my family, and I am 100 percent committed to finding a solution to protect Medicare for current and future beneficiaries.

As a medical doctor I've been disappointed that some have sought to use Medicare to gain political advantage. This is not a political issue.

The Medicare trust fund began going broke last year, it is already \$5 billion in debt this year, and will be completely broke in 5 years. We don't have time for politics as usual.

I hear some talk about cuts in Medicare. There are no cuts in our plan.

The plan I voted for increases Medicare spending from \$5,200 per person in 1996 to \$7,000 per person in 2002. That's an \$1,800 increase in Medicare spending.

We do want to spend smarter. We do want to attack waste, fraud, and abuse. We want to give seniors choices in health care.

I urge those who have made this a partisan issue, to look beyond partisan politics and come to the table to work with us to do what is right for our seniors and future Medicare beneficiaries.

Mr. Speaker, I call for bipartisan efforts to restore and preserve our Medicare beneficiaries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCINTOSH). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Connecticut [Ms. DELAURO] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Ms. DELAURO addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gen-

tleman from California [Mr. RIGGS] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. RIGGS 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 New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. PALLONE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

THE MINIMUM WAGE

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

Mr. DICKEY. Mr. Speaker, I would like to agree with the comments of the gentleman from Florida about the Medicare cuts being not cuts but just slowing of the growth. This is something that we are finding in our State of Arkansas, people are being deceived by ads being paid for by special interests, and I am glad that that is brought up.

Mainly what I want to talk about today is the minimum wage. I am an employer, a restaurant owner, as well as a Member of Congress from Arkansas. All of those things are important in this discussion. But before I get into more of the specifics, I would like for us to direct our attention to something that we have not seemed to bring to center stage as much as we should. In the business world, in the marketplace, it is the consumer, the person who is buying the goods, who is the boss. We lose sight of that fact.

Mr. Speaker, if the boss finds that he or she cannot afford the price of the goods, then the boss will go to somewhere else where they can find a better price. If in fact the boss cannot go where he or she can get good service, they will go somewhere else. So all the time that we are talking about raising the minimum wage, we are not considering the fact who is paying it.

The consumer, the people who buy the goods are paying it. In my particular instance, it is the person who comes into restaurants, and no question I am biased in that viewpoint, but I want to share with this body some of the bases for my being opposed to the raise, to the rise in the minimum wage.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, some people think that the cost that we have in restaurants, the only increase that we will have in the minimum wage debate is what we will pay in addition to the present wage that we give now or whatever the increase might be, but that is not true. Everything that we buy, the meat, the lettuce, the tomatoes, even the transportation, the paper goods, all of these things will have increased prices or at least the push up from increased prices.

So, if I am going to sell a taco for 89 cents and I want to keep the same margins that I have had before, which I am