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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m., and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. COBLE].

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

June 4, 1996.

I hereby designate the Honorable HOWARD COBLE to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING BUSINESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of May 12, 1995, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority and minority leader limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey [Mr. PALLONE] for 5 minutes.

GINGRICH-DOLE MEDICARE PLAN AND DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE

Mr. PALLONE. Mr. Speaker, this weekend on NBC's "Meet the Press," House Speaker NEWT GINGRICH went on the attack on Medicare once again, and now he claims that the President and the Democrats in Congress are deliberately misleading the American people about his plan; that is, the Republican plan, so-called plan to save Medicare. I would like to tell my colleagues that nothing could be further from the truth. Last year the American people overwhelmingly rejected the Repub-

lican plan to cut \$270 billion from Medicare to pay for tax breaks primarily for the wealthy, and the Speaker knows the public opinion is not on his side, so he is trying to confuse the American people by making extreme attacks on Democrats' integrity rather than addressing the Medicare issue correctly.

I guess we should not be surprised because it was Speaker GINGRICH who last year said it was his goal to see Medicare, and I quote, "wither on the vine." The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is that the Republicans want to use the budget, this budget that they passed a few weeks ago and is now in conference with the Senate, as the vehicle for transforming Medicare in a very radical way.

My position is, and I believe it is that of most Democrats, if changes in Medicare are to come they should not be made in the context of the budget, they should not be a vehicle to make cuts in Medicare that would be used for other priorities, such as tax breaks for the wealthy or increased defense spending or whatever other initiatives the Republicans plan for the budget.

Now, we know this Wednesday the Medicare trustees are going to come out with their annual report and already we are hearing that the Speaker and the Republican leadership are going to use this report, which will show again that Medicare does need some changes in order for it not to become insolvent 5 or 6 years from now, but the bottom line is that the Republican leadership plan to save Medicare is not an effort to make some adjustments in Medicare so that it remains solvent and so that the money is available to continue the program as it currently exists. Rather, they want to make major radical structural changes in the Medicare program that will reduce the quality of care, will reduce senior's ability to choose their own doctors or hospitals and basically force

most senior citizens in either managed care programs where they do not have choices or alternatively make them pay more out of pocket for the services that they get.

I wanted to point out in the time I have remaining here what I would call a number of key issues that I think reveal the true colors of the Gingrich-Dole Medicare plan. First, the Republican leadership claims that Medicare is going broke and they are saving it. Well, last year they knew they were cutting Medicare before the Medicare trustees' report came out. The trustees' report was used and will be used again this year to masquerade their true motives, which is to cut Medicare for tax cuts for the wealthy.

Second, it is likely that the Medicare trustees will report that the part A trust fund will become insolvent, they are claiming, I think, we expect the report to say that the insolvency projection is about 5 years from now. Well, Democrats are interested in shoring up the Medicare trust fund and have voted for plans that achieve this goal.

President Clinton has proposed a plan that will extend the life of the Medicare program, if you will, for at least another 10 years. So this notion that somehow the Republicans are saving Medicare is simply false. The Democrats have put forward proposals that would save Medicare and prevent solvency but not make basic structural changes in the Medicare program.

Third, the GOP claim they are merely slowing the rate of growth of Medicare with their drastic cuts. Well, let us be honest about it. When the Gingrich-Dole rate of growth does not keep pace with the increasing medical costs, then seniors will either pay more or see reduced services and second class health care.

This was Speaker GINGRICH's main point over the weekend on "Meet the Press." He claimed, oh, we are just slowing the growth of Medicare, we are

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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