

worry about them." But this alleged distinction between quotas and other forms of numerical preferences is truly a semantic distinction without a difference. The label, after all, is not the offending practice. What is offensive is the practice of granting preferences on the basis of race and gender, and that practice is no less offensive when called by a name other than a quota.

I may be wrong about the President's intentions. I hope that I am wrong. This issue and the principle it touches on are much too important to surrender to lawyers and bureaucrats. If a society without discrimination is really our goal, then we need to engage in a national dialog about how best to get there. That means getting back to the original purpose of affirmative action by continuing our efforts to reach out to all segments of the community—to make everyone aware of opportunities. But it also means ceasing discrimination now. And that requires ending the Federal Government's massive system of race and gender preferences. President Clinton should embrace the principle of nondiscrimination and act to dismantle the system of preferences—a system which divides Americans and reinforces prejudice.

SAVE MEDICARE FROM BANKRUPTCY

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

Mr. NORWOOD. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor this morning with the people back home in mind. For me, home is Augusta, GA, and the 10th District of Georgia. I must tell you how wonderful it was for me to be home this past weekend. Spending time with the hard-working people of the 10th district serves to strengthen my resolve, that what we are doing here in the next few months is what is right for America.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the people of America to consider the facts of our situation. We are 5 trillion dollars in debt. Fifteen cents of every dollar we spend goes to interest on the debt. The problem of the debt continues to grow out of control. Consider this: On February the 6th, I came to the floor in support of the line-item veto. In my remarks, I noted that the students in Sallie Bullock's calculus class at Madison County High in Danielsville, GA, already collectively owe \$310,760. I noted that Mary Mills' 5th grade class at Oconee County Intermediate School in Watkinsville, GA, already owes \$365,600. I noted that Martha Scroggs' kindergarten class at Episcopal Day School in Augusta already owes \$457,000. Since I gave that speech 5 short months ago, Sallie Bullock's students owe an additional \$7,600; Mary Mills' students owe an additional \$8,940; and Martha Scroggs' students owe an additional \$11,175.

Mr. Speaker, what did those children do to earn that additional debt? How

can we so thoughtless saddle children just out of kindergarten with more and more debt? It is immoral and we must bring that to an end by balancing our budget.

Mr. Speaker, it is simply a matter of fact that Medicare will go bankrupt in 7 years. It is a documented fact in a report put out by the Medicare trustees—three of whom are members of the Clinton administration. The solvency of Medicare is not a partisan issue. Medicare is going bankrupt. The Republicans have made a decision to fix Medicare. We will strengthen Medicare so that it may survive well into the next century. We must act to save the system now. Pretending that everything is all right is simply fantasizing.

Mr. Speaker, on this day many centuries ago, Emperor Nero Played his fiddle while the great city of Rome burned to the ground. It appears that all these centuries later, some of my colleagues on the other side have decided to take up Emperor Nero's mantle. Some of my colleagues want to play games. Last week the other side issued the proclamation that if the we, the Republicans, don't speed up the reconciliation process then they will slow the business of the House down. Yes, America—that's right. If we don't speed up; they will slow things down.

Mr. Speaker, let me be the first to say that I will stay here morning, noon, and night to balance our budget and to save Medicare from bankruptcy. I will stay here through the weekends to balance our budget and to save Medicare from bankruptcy. I will be here until the cows come home—if that's what it takes to balance our budget and to save Medicare from bankruptcy. The future of our Nation is at stake—and I would urge my colleagues to rise above the political games others may want to play. The business we are doing for America is too important to be sidetracked by those who would rather fiddle.

THE HISTORY OF MEDICARE AND ITS IMPORTANCE

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

Mr. DINGELL. Mr. Speaker, I rise to discuss the history of Medicare and to discuss the importance of that program to the United States. I have heard a lot of people discuss how it is that Medicare is in trouble. Well, Medicare is one of the best working and most efficient programs in the history of this country. The cost of collecting money and disbursing it is less than 1½ percent.

The problem of Medicare is that costs of Medicare have, like all the costs of all other programs for paying for health, been stressed almost beyond belief by enormous increases which have occurred in health care costs across this country. The problem of Medicare is not one that it is not serving people. On the contrary, it has raised the num-

ber of Americans from something like 40 percent to better than 97 percent in the senior citizen category who have health insurance available to them now, something which was previously not available. Now, under Medicare, Americans can be assured that that health care system is going to meet their health care concerns.

Is Medicare going to go bankrupt? Yes, if something is not done. But not until 2002. Nothing need be done to cut the benefits, but rather to assure additional efficiencies. And what really needs to be addressed is to understand that getting control of the overall costs of health care is something which has to be done in order to protect not only Medicare, but Medicaid, Blue Cross, and all of the other health care programs, that are both public and private inside this country.

It is only fair to say that my colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle are talking not about cutting Medicare to save the system, but, rather, they are talking about cutting Medicare in order to make possible a tax cut.

Medicare benefits are going to be cut, according to the Republican budget, about \$270 billion. However, a health care cut of this magnitude is going to be matched by a tax cut which will go mostly to the richest 10 percent of the people in this country, and will cost the government about \$240 billion.

A wiser approach would be to address the underlying problems of our health care system. A wiser approach would be to see to it that we address the concerns of all in preserving Medicare, but to do so not to provide a tax cut to the wealthy, but rather to address the significant problems which exist in all health care costs and in payments for all health care costs.

You know, it is a matter of history that the Republicans voted overwhelmingly against Medicare, and they opposed it time after time whenever the issue was before this body or was before the House or before the Senate. They opposed it in committee as well as on the floor of the two bodies.

Medicare is something which was enacted because the Democrats forced it through. It is something which will be protected and preserved because the Democrats prevented the Republicans from eviscerating that program or from converting it into a private program. There are significant attempts going on now to privatize Medicare.

One of the remarkable things which occurred in the early discussion was the comments of Republican Members who criticized Medicare, pointing out that it was socialized medicine, claiming that it was going to threaten independence and individual liberties of Americans who would derive benefits under that particular program.

Well, history has shown that Medicare has been one of the great blessings, not only to this country, but to senior citizens, not only to senior citizens, but to the younger Americans

who no longer have to choose between providing for themselves, for their own retirement, or the education of their children, and providing for the health care desperately needed by American senior citizens.

This has been one of the great and shining examples of success of Government action in the history of this country. It and Social Security are two of the most popular programs in the lexicon of Government programs, and they are supported by almost everyone. Cuts in those programs would be regarded by almost every American as being something not only unwise, but dangerous from the standpoint of the well-being of our society, our economy and of this country.

Indeed, these programs have not only contributed to the well-being of Americans and their health and peace of mind, but they are also programs which have done much to make meaningful the promise of America.

I urge my colleagues and I urge my fellow Americans to support the idea that Medicare can be saved, not by draconian cuts, but by wise changes in administration. Let us use the money we have in Medicare for protecting the senior citizens and the people of this country, and not for tax cuts to the wealthy.

AMERICANS WANT LESS GOVERNMENT AND LESS REGULATION

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

Mr. SCARBOROUGH. Mr. Speaker, you know, last November the American people delivered a mandate to this institution, a supposed mandate as we heard from a previous speaker. The fact of the matter is not a single Republican Governor, Senator, or Congressman was defeated in that election.

Why did Americans vote Republican? It is because they wanted less government. They wanted less regulation. They wanted to get government, in the words of Ronald Reagan, off the people's back.

That is what we are starting to do. Now, it is going to be a long, hard, drawn out process, but, you know, a year ago when I was campaigning, I was talking about how the American hour was upon us, about how Americans had to decide once and for all whether we were going to go back and repeat the same mistakes that we have been making for the past 40 years, or whether we are, instead, going to turn back to those basic simple truths that our Founding Fathers laid as the foundation of this great country.

James Madison said that we have staked the entire future of American civilization on the power of the individual, not on the power of government. Thomas Jefferson said that the government that governs least governs best.

Yet in this time of the American people's call for less government intrusion in their lives, an ominous trend is developing, and we have seen it develop since the Oklahoma City bombing.

Now, the Oklahoma City bombing was an absolute tragedy. I do not think anyone in this Chamber could have looked at those pictures and not been absolutely horrified by what went on in Oklahoma City and the lives that were lost. But the fact of the matter is this: We do not prevent Oklahoma Cities in the future by eviscerating our fourth amendment rights. There is a counterterrorism bill that is coming to the floor in the near future, and some Members have openly said that Americans are going to have to get used to living with less freedoms for more safety.

Well, that is very ironic when you consider what Benjamin Franklin said over 200 years ago. It is almost as if he anticipated an event like this and the gut reaction that it would cause. Ben Franklin said those Americans who are willing to give up freedoms for a little bit of temporary safety deserve neither safety nor freedom.

That is something that we need to remember as we rush quickly toward passing a bill that is going to increase the Federal Government's power to wiretap, to conduct warrantless searches, and to basically give the Federal Government more police power than it has ever had.

Let us take a couple of steps back here and again listen to what the American people were saying last November. They were not saying we are electing Republicans because we like the name "Republican" in front of the candidate. They voted in one of the most historic congressional landslides in recent history for the party they believed was going to represent less government intrusion in their personal lives.

I believe this is a step in the wrong direction, and I believe you are going to see Republicans and Democrats alike coming together and doing what they can to make sure that the American people's will is heard; more importantly, that our fourth amendment rights and our constitutional rights are protected through this time.

You know, anybody that speaks out against the Federal Government's involvement in Waco or Ruby Ridge or some of these other incidents are considered crazies, right wing fanatics. But the fact of the matter is we are finally shining a little bit of light on what happened in Waco and Ruby Ridge, and we have already seen that the No. 2 man at the FBI has had to be demoted because the FBI messed up. At Ruby Ridge they shot an innocent woman and a man's son, and they did so without proper reason. Then they went back behind there and destroyed documents to hide what they were doing.

Let me tell you something, that is not what the American people voted

for last November. They voted for less government. They voted also, I might say in conclusion, for honesty and integrity.

As I close, Mr. Speaker, I just have to respond very briefly to what the gentleman from New Jersey said and the gentleman from Michigan. They talked about how much they cared about Medicare. They said they cared about Medicare so much they were going to allow it to go bankrupt in the year 2002. I think I care about it a little more and the rest of the Members here do, too. We are going to save Medicare.

THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF MEDICARE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Connecticut [Mrs. KENNELLY] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. KENNELLY. Mr. Speaker, at the end of the month our Nation will celebrate the 30th anniversary of Medicare. This occasion should remind all of us that nearly every single one of us is touched by Medicare. If you are an individual over 65, that is where you look to for your health care. If you are under 65 you certainly think about Medicare when you are planning for your retirement.

We also know that those who have mothers and fathers alive or other relatives that they care about or are concerned about, they know Medicare is there for them. But most of all, this anniversary should make us all think about what Medicare has done for America's older citizens across the board.

Before Medicare, more than half of all senior citizens did not have any health care coverage. Many seniors faced financial ruin when they had to go to the hospital for any length of time, and all too often they were forced to turn to others to help them, sometimes threatening those that they turned to, their financial future. But most of all, Medicare's anniversary should inspire us to know that we have to make sure Medicare is there for all of us.

Eventually, what happened in the past was elderly people had nowhere to turn. Today, 97 percent of all Americans over the age of 65 have health care coverage; 97 percent. And while we must still work to address the problem of long-term care, which is still very much there, Medicare has saved seniors from going untreated or bankrupt when they needed to have health care.

Before Medicare, 35 percent of American senior citizens lived below the poverty line. I think some of us can remember this, in part because a single trip of any length to the hospital destroyed somebody's life earnings. Today, 30 years after Medicare was signed into law, the number of elderly in poverty has declined to 12 percent. Much of this has to do with the Medicare system.