

He also changed dramatically what it means to grow old in America, and to watch our parents grow old.

Medicare helps seniors replace dependence with dignity, uncertainty with stability, and destitution with financial security.

Over the last three decades—despite the turmoil of wars and recessions and even a crisis in our health care system—Medicare has survived to become one of the most popular—and successful—programs in our Nation's history.

Ask America's families. They will tell you. Medicare is not some Great Society extravagance. It is the cornerstone of financial security and independence of older Americans and their families.

Indeed, when you ask people what Medicare should look like in the 21st century, most Americans say we should make only minor changes in the program—or no changes at all.

The American people want us to preserve Medicare and strengthen it, not weaken it.

They want us to honor the commitment we made 30 years ago to seniors and their families, not abandon it.

THE ROUTE TO PASSAGE OF MEDICARE

Passage of the Medicare bill did not come easily or quickly.

It took 20 years. Twenty years from the time Harry Truman began the campaign for a national plan to provide affordable health care for all Americans.

Although big-money special interests and their allies in Congress were able to block President Truman's plan by claiming falsely that it would mean "socialized medicine," Democrats did not give up.

Instead, we refocused our efforts on the area of greatest need: health security for America's seniors.

In 1960, the Medicare concept gained an important supporter when then-Senator John Kennedy sponsored a Social Security approach to health care for the elderly.

Again, Republicans invoked the fear of social welfarism.

These criticisms only strengthened Kennedy's resolve. As a presidential candidate, he was even more determined to make Medicare a reality.

Three times Kennedy requested passage of Medicare, and three times it was opposed in large measure by Republicans and defeated.

In the short-run, President Kennedy's efforts failed. But they laid important groundwork for the final, successful push for Medicare's passage.

After President Kennedy's death, President Johnson took up the fight.

Though criticism of Medicare continued—some of it from Members who today serve in this chamber—President Johnson was undeterred. Congress finally passed the measure, and the bill was signed into law 30 years ago this Sunday.

REPUBLICAN BUDGET

It is a strange and sad irony that the Republican majority chose the year of Medicare's 30th anniversary to unveil a

budget that threatens to severely weaken the program. Thirty years after its passage, we are fighting to preserve the one program that, more than any other, older Americans and their families count on for economic security.

It was only a year ago that Republicans and Democrats alike spoke in this Chamber of the need to ensure health security for all Americans.

Today, Republicans are rushing headlong in the opposite direction. Instead of extending coverage to all Americans, they are preparing to increase dramatically health costs for older Americans.

In their drive to gain control of this Congress, Republicans assured us that any dollars they cut from Medicare would be plowed back into the program to strengthen and improve it.

They promised to balance the budget, cut taxes, leave Social Security and defense spending untouched, and do no harm to Medicare.

Many seniors hung their hats on this promise and gave the new majority the benefit of the doubt.

Now we know the truth. We have seen draft Republican plans for Medicare. And we know that their promises to protect the program were hollow.

What a way to say "Happy Anniversary" to Medicare and the people who support this program.

FACES OF MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES

There are many in this Chamber who would like to reduce the Medicare debate to numbers on a ledger. But this debate is about more than debits and credits. It is about people, and the promises we have made to them.

Today's Medicare beneficiaries lived through the Great Depression and the Second World War. They established homes and built families. They always looked to the future instead of dwelling on the hardships of the past.

Most are now retired and live on modest Social Security benefits, pensions, and savings. And most depend on Medicare as their primary source of health coverage.

They do not live lives of leisure and luxury. Three-quarters of Medicare beneficiaries have incomes below \$25,000 per year. Fewer than 5 percent have incomes over \$50,000.

And each year, health care costs chew up a growing percentage of their incomes. The average senior today spends over 20 percent of his or her income on health care—even with Medicare coverage.

For many seniors, the prospect of living without Medicare is unimaginable.

What should they give up to pay their doctors bills? What would those who want to cut Medicare have older Americans do without?

Food?

Heat in the winter?

Electricity?

Should they not go to the doctor when they are sick?

Should they not take the medicine they need?

Our Republican colleagues say their Medicare cuts will not hurt anyone.

That is not true.

Cutting Medicare by \$270 billion—which is what Republicans are proposing—will cost seniors nearly \$900 per year in additional out-of-pocket expenses—\$900 a year from seniors living on fixed incomes so that we can give more tax breaks to the rich.

Republicans will claim differently, that a more efficient program will absorb the cuts. But their numbers simply do not add up.

They call it reform. I call it what it is: an insurance hike.

Money to pay for higher premiums will not materialize out of thin air. It will come out of Social Security checks. Or, it will come out of the savings seniors worked so hard for—savings they are counting on to last the remainder of their lives.

This is the human side of the Medicare debate.

It is a side of the discussion that makes some of us feel uncomfortable, and rightfully so. But it is a side we must recognize and address. We owe it to our Nation's seniors.

CONCLUSION

It is true that everyone must sacrifice if we are to balance our budget.

No one knows about change and sacrifice more than older Americans. They did what was necessary to make the blessings of that freedom available for us today.

All they are asking in return from us now is that we keep our promise to them.

When President Johnson signed the Medicare legislation 30 years ago in Independence MO, standing next to him was President Truman, the man who had 20 years earlier staked so much of his own Presidency on health security for all Americans.

After the bill had been signed, President Truman turned to President Johnson and said, "You have made me a very, very happy man."

When I look at what some Republicans are preparing to do to Medicare, I wonder what Harry Truman would say today?

RECESS UNTIL 12:30 P.M., MONDAY,
JULY 31, 1995

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will now stand in recess until 12:30 p.m., Monday, July 31.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 2:39 p.m., recessed until Monday, July 31, 1995, at 12:30 p.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate July 28, 1995:

IN THE AIR FORCE

THE FOLLOWING-NAMED OFFICERS FOR APPOINTMENT TO THE GRADE OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL WHILE ASSIGNED TO A POSITION OF IMPORTANCE AND RESPONSIBILITY UNDER TITLE 10, UNITED STATES CODE, SECTION 601: