

IMPACT OF REPUBLICAN BUDGET CUTS ON RURAL AMERICA

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

Mr. BISHOP. Mr. Speaker, we are here today to focus on rural communities and the impact of the proposed Republican budget cuts on rural America. Current common wisdom is that two elements are essential for sustainable rural development: first, long-range strategic planning, and second, local leadership. We must support the efforts of State and Federal officials, and more importantly, the motivation and leadership shown by local community leaders who have been successful in making educational advances, and rural economic development a reality in their own communities. But we must look forward to more.

We have all heard the statistics describing the decline of agriculture as the main rural economic base. And we know that rural areas differ greatly by region in terms of publication, income levels, and the relative importance of agriculture to the local economy. We also know that the shift in the national economy toward world markets requires rural areas—which are hampered by geographic isolation, inadequate infrastructure, and a shortage of capital—to compete in an unfamiliar global arena. But I believe that the citizens of Georgia, and particularly in the second district, have some of the most enterprising, efficient, and effective rural communities in the Nation.

But the budget cuts proposed by the Republican Leadership work against the common wisdom of how we can best support the vitality of our rural communities and citizens. First of all, let me speak about the Republican budget proposal which cuts over \$13 billion from our farm commodity programs. These cuts will come out of the pockets of farmers who live in my district. According to a recent letter sent to the Speaker from 15 members of the Speaker's own party, the current Freedom to Farm proposal will cause the U.S. taxpayer to actually spend even more on subsidies under the Freedom to Farm proposal than under the proposal put forth by the Democrats, or even the farm proposal put forward by the Republicans in the other body.

Other cuts proposed by the Republicans will put a dagger in rural America. From health care to agriculture to education, the Republican budget targets rural America, where we can least afford to lessen our efforts. The Republican budget raises taxes on over 229 thousand working families in rural Georgia by an average of \$368 by the 2002. In addition, the Republican cuts to the earned income tax credit will add an \$84.5 million tax increase on working families and their children in rural Georgia.

Republican education cuts will deny 113,000 children basic and advanced skills instruction in rural America in

1996 alone. Title 1 funds for reading instruction in rural areas will be cut by \$113 million, denying crucial assistance at a time when many small-town and rural school systems are already having trouble making ends meet.

The Republican budget will cut rural housing funding in our small communities. Cuts to public housing capital assistance in rural areas will total \$460 million next year, which will severely hinder efforts by rural housing agencies to provide security and anticrime programs. The Republicans will also cut \$108 million in funding for assistance to the homeless in rural America. This will mean 4.9 million fewer nights of shelter for America's rural homeless.

Republicans propose to cut Medicare by \$270 billion in this body—three times larger than the largest cuts in history—just to pay for a tax cut for the wealthy. Their budget will cut Medicare spending in rural communities by \$58 billion over 7 years, a 20-percent cut in the year 2002. The Republican cuts will force 9.6 million older and disabled Americans in rural America to pay higher premiums and higher deductibles. In Georgia, it will cut \$2.7 billion for our rural areas from Medicare.

The Republican Medicaid cuts will eliminate coverage for children, nursing home residents, and people who need long-term care throughout rural America. Two million, two hundred thousand rural Americans—including over 1 million children—will be denied Medicaid coverage. The budget will cut Medicaid in rural areas by as much as \$45 billion, forcing poor children, people with disabilities, and older Americans to lose coverage.

We should be focusing on four key principles that will help our rural communities:

First: Providing economic opportunity that will create jobs within the community and region, and training for jobs that offer upward mobility;

Second: Offering assistance for sustainable community development to further the creation of vibrant community institutions;

Third: Encouraging community-based partnerships that involve all segments of the community, including our centers of learning and community institutions; and

Fourth: Helping to provide a strategic vision for change that builds on the assets of the community—coordinating a response to community needs in a comprehensive fashion.

We must look forward to the survival of small and rural communities; we should not be looking for opportunities to twist the dagger into the heart of rural America, the dagger that is offered by the Republican budget proposals.

MEDICARE AND MEDICAID PROPOSALS WILL DEVASTATE SENIORS, POOR WOMEN, AND CHILDREN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Florida [Ms. BROWN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BROWN of Florida. Mr. Speaker, the House of Representatives is the People's House. We were sent here to Congress with a mission: to serve the people. As Members of Congress, we should be listening to our constituents and voting against proposals that will devastate our seniors, poor women, and children.

First, the Republicans went after Medicare, saying they were going to save it by cutting \$270 billion out of it. And this time, the Republicans are going after Medicaid, the program that serves the poorest, the sickest—people most in need.

They said they were saving Medicare. Now they say they are saving Medicaid by cutting \$182 billion from the program. Well, I come from Florida where I served for 10 years in the Florida House. In Florida we have a saying for that kind of thing, "That dog won't hunt."

Thousands of my constituents have told me that they are outraged at the Republicans' reverse Robin Hood tactics, stealing from the working people and the poor and giving tax breaks to the wealthy.

Mr. Speaker, we can fool some of the people some of the time, but we cannot fool all the people all of the time.

I am most concerned about how the Republican Medicaid plan will hurt Florida. Basically, it is a big slap in the face to the thousands of Floridians on a fixed income, just managing to get by.

According to our Governor, the Medicaid plan will cost our State \$8.4 billion over the next 7 years. But forget about these huge dollar figures for a moment. Let's look at this in real terms: people!

Under the Republican Medicaid plan formula, hundreds of thousands of Florida residents would be cut from the program. Let me ask you: What do the Republicans think the Floridians cut off from Medicaid are going to do for health care? Do they have a plan for that? I don't think so.

The biggest problem with the Republican Medicaid plan is that the Republican formula for distributing funds to the States does not take into account Florida's population explosion. Florida's growth should not be overlooked. My State will be capped at a 6 percent growth rate from 1998 to 2002, while Florida can expect that the growth in Florida is expected to go from 12 to 14 percent.

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That, my friends, is a cut. The Republicans are putting up smoke and mirrors when they say that these are not cuts.