sooner or later, we have to realize whatever the military utility these insidious weapons have, it is time we paid attention to the terrible human suffering it is causing indiscriminately day after day after day. It is time, as civilized nations on this Earth, to join together to end the use of these indiscriminate, inhumane weapons.

I yield the floor.

Mr. KENNEDY addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized. The Chair advises the Senator from Massachusetts that morning business is set to expire at 12 noon—just to advise the Senator.

PART B MEDICARE PREMIUMS

Mr. KENNEDY. I thank the Chair.

Mr. President, in just a very short period of time, we will address the continuing resolution, and I want to bring the attention of our colleagues to a provision in there which I find objectionable and will either personally offer an amendment or will join with others to address what I consider to be an unacceptable inclusion in the proposal, and that is dealing with the part B Medicare premium.

We have had a debate on the issues of Medicare during earlier consideration, about the unjustified, I believe, cuts in the Medicare system that are being advanced by our Republican colleagues in order to justify the tax breaks for wealthy individuals. And now as a result of the actions that we have taken, we are seeing put into play the first of the results of the actions that have been taken by the Senate and the House. It is being added to this continuing resolution.

I hope that the President will veto the proposal. I join with him in rejecting the attempt to try and blackmail the President of the United States on this continuing resolution into accepting this particular provision, and I would like to outline to the Senate the reasons why I find it so objectionable.

The amendment would strike from the continuing resolution the provision increasing the part B premium by $136 next year, compared to the level provided under the current Medicare law. This proposal is a part of the overall Republican assault on Medicare, does not deserve to be enacted into law and it certainly does not belong on a continuing resolution.

If the Republican program becomes law, it will devastate senior citizens, working families and children in every community in America. It extends an open hand to powerful special interests and gives the back of the hand to hard-working Americans. It makes a mockery of the family values the Republican majority pretends to represent.

The Republican assault on Medicare is a frontal attack on the Nation's elderly. Medicare is part of Social Security. It is a contract between the Government and the people that says, ''put into a trust fund during your working years and we will guarantee good health care in your retirement years.'' It is wrong for the Republicans to break that contract, and it is wrong for Republicans to propose deep cuts in Medicare in excess of anything needed to protect the trust fund, and it is doubly wrong for the Republicans to propose those deep cuts in Medicare in order to pay for tax breaks for the wealthy.

The cuts in Medicare are too harsh and too extreme: $280 billion over the next 7 years, premiums will double, deductibles will double, senior citizens will be squeezed hard to give up their own doctors and HMO's.

The fundamental unfairness of this proposal is plain: Senior citizens' median income is only $17,750; 40 percent have incomes of less than $10,000, and because of the gaps in Medicare, senior citizens already pay too much for the health care they need. Yet, the out-of-pocket costs that seniors must pay for premiums and deductibles will rise by $71 billion over the next 7 years—$71 billion rise over the next 7 years—an average of almost $4,000 for elderly couples.

The Medicare trustees have stated clearly that $89 billion is all that is needed to protect the trust fund for a decade, not $280 billion.

The Democratic alternative provides that amount and will not raise premiums an additional dime, will not raise deductibles a dime. It will give senior citizens real choices, not force them to give up their own doctor.

The Republican Medicare plan also deserves to be rejected because of the lavish giveaways to special interest groups. In the House and Senate proposals, insurance companies got what they wanted—the opportunity to get their hands on Medicare and obtain billions of dollars in profit; the American Medical Association got what it wanted—no reduction in fees to doctors and limits on malpractice awards. The list goes on and on. Clinical labs no longer have to meet Federal standards to guarantee the accuracy of tests. Federal standards to prevent the abuse of patients in nursing homes will be eliminated. Pharmaceutical firms will be given the right to charge higher prices for their drugs.

Because of this unjust Republican plan, millions of elderly Americans will be forced to go without the health care they need. Millions more will have to choose between food on the table or adequate heat in the winter, paying the rent or paying for medical care.

Senior citizens have earned their Medicare benefits. They pay for them and they deserve them. It is bad enough that the Republicans have proposed this unjust plan, and it is worse that they have taken the single largest cost increase for senior citizens, the increase in the Medicare part B premium, and attached it to the continuing resolution.

Cuts in payments to doctors are not included in the continuing resolution. Cuts in payments to hospitals are not included in the continuing resolution. The only Medicare cut that is in this bill is a proposal to impose a new tax on the elderly and disabled.

The Republican strategy is clear: Try to rush through your unacceptable proposals because you know they cannot stand the light of day; try to blackmail the President into signing them, with the threat of shutting down the Government if he does not go along.

The part B premium increase is particularly objectionable because it breaks the national compact with senior citizens over Social Security. Every American should know about it, and every senior citizen should object to it. Medicare is part of Social Security. The Medicare premium is deducted directly from a senior citizens' Social Security check. Every increase in the Medicare premium is a reduction in Social Security benefits.

The Republican plan proposes an increase in the part B premium and a reduction in Social Security, which is unprecedented in size. Premiums are already scheduled to go up, under current law, from $553 a year today, to $730 by the year 2002. Under the Republican plan, according to the Congressional Budget Office, the premium will go up much higher, to $1,068 a year.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Chair reminds the Senator that the time for the period of morning business has expired.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed for 5 more minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, under the Republican plan, as I say, and under the existing law, by 2002, it will be $730. It will go up under this proposal to $1,068 a year. As a result, over the life of the Republican plan, all senior citizens will have a minimum of $1,240 more deducted from their Social Security checks. Every elderly couple will pay $2,400 more.

The impact of this program is devastating for moderate and low-income seniors. It is instructive to compare the premium increase next year to the portion of the Republican plan tucked into the continuing resolution to the Social Security cost-of-living increase that maintains the purchasing power of the Social Security check.

One-quarter of all seniors have Social Security benefits of $5,364, which is indicated here on the chart. The COLA for a senior at this benefit level will be $139 next year. The average senior citizen has a Social Security benefit of $7,874 a year. The COLA for someone at this benefit is $205.

But under the Republican plan, the premium, next year, will be $126 higher than under the current law. The average-income seniors will be robbed of almost two-thirds of their COLA. Low-income seniors will be robbed of a whopping 90 percent of their COLA. That is, with the increase of $136, which would

be the increase in the premium, they would receive the $139, which leaves them $3 and, essentially, the increase in the premiums of part B that is included in the continuing resolution will take 98 percent out of the Social Security checks of American seniors that are receiving the $5,364.

So the idea that this is somehow separated from Social Security is wrong. For those individuals who try to give assurances to our senior citizens that the increase in the Medicare is leaving Social Security alone is absolutely and fundamentally wrong. If you were receiving the average, which is $7,874 a year, your COLA increase would be $205. With the subtraction of $136, again, which is the increased Republican premium, you would have $69 left. In other words, there is a 66 percent cut in your COLA—a real cut in your quality of life—which is there to address the challenges that seniors face with the increased cost of living. If you are receiving the $10,043 per year, which is the top percentile of the seniors, you get an average of $261. They will have $125 left, and it is taking half of all of their increase—their protections under Social Security.

So the Republicans' attack on Medicare will make life harder, sicker, and shorter for millions of elderly Americans, who built this country and made it great. They deserve better from Congress. This cruel and unjust Republican plan to turn the Medicare trust fund into a slush fund for tax breaks for the wealthy deserves to be defeated.

Mr. President, I think we have outlined what I consider to be the most objectionable features of the add-ons that have been included in the continuing resolution. There are other provisions which I find objectionable. But every senior ought to know what is happening to their Medicare next year under the Republican proposal—an alleged continuing resolution, to ensure that the existing basic structure of our system of Government and our support for existing programs, so many of which our seniors depend upon, the extension of that—the Republicans have added on the increases in the part B premiums, which is going to, if enacted, have an absolutely devastating impact not just on the Medicare, but on the Social Security system.

This demonstrates how this kind of proposal of the Republicans, under the continuing resolution, which historically has never been used for a sleight of hand maneuver—which this is—to try and jam this unjustified, unwarranted and, I find, dangerous proposal to the health and well-being of our seniors, and certainly to their security, through the Senate on a Thursday afternoon prior to the Veterans Day weekend is completely unacceptable. It is wrong and unfair. When you look at why this is being done—not to preserve the basic integrity of the Medicare system, but we are adding these kinds of burdens on the seniors of our country in order to have tax breaks for the wealthiest individuals. This is not necessary. This is not right. It is wrong to take out of the pockets of our seniors this kind of protection, which the COLA provides, in order to provide tax breaks for wealthy individuals and the corporations of this country.

We know this sleight-of-hand effort by the Republicans to do this, they feel they have to do it in order to comply with the other provisions of their budget. It is unjustified and unwise.

The President has identified this as an unacceptable provision. The American people ought to understand the attempts to tinker with Social Security. This effectively reaches the basic issue of Social Security; that is, whether the cost of living, which reflects the increased cost of food and medicines and heat and shelter for our senior citizens, will effectively be emasculated.

It is particularly unfair to the neediest people on Social Security. Those that are in the lowest level of Social Security effectively are having all of their COLA wiped out. It is wrong and unfair. It is unjustified.

It is a prime reason why this sleight-of-hand maneuver by our Republican friends should be rejected by the President. He was right to identify it, and I hope it will be vetoed.

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to proceed in morning business for 10 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. KYL). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GREGG. I wish to respond to the Senator from Massachusetts.

I find it a bit disingenuous that Members of the other party would come to this floor and state that it is robbing senior citizens, inappropriately treating senior citizens, for us as Republicans to be putting forward proposals which essentially assure the solvency of the Medicare trust fund, the purpose of which is to supply health insurance for our senior citizens, when no proposal—no proposal—has come from the other side of the aisle or from the President.

Furthermore, to state that allowing the percentage of premium that is paid by seniors to drop from 31.5 percent, which it is today and which it has been for a while, back to 25 percent is an action of good will or a gesture of kindness or gratitude or appropriateness that we should pursue as a nation on behalf of our senior citizens, is to ignore who pays the difference.

Under the present law for the part B premium, seniors' children, their grandchildren who are working—most seniors have children and grandchildren who are working—support 69 percent, approximately, of the cost of their seniors' health insurance. So if you happen to be a working American today and you have parents who are on Medicare, or an uncle or grandfather who is on Medicare, or just a friend who is a senior citizen who is on Medicare, you are paying as a working American 69 percent of the cost of that individual's health insurance.

We have, as a society, said that is reasonable, that is fair. We, the working generation, are willing to do that. I am happy to do it. My taxes go to support that.

If we reduce that percentage from 31.5 percent—which seniors pay; so they pay a third of the cost, and working Americans, their children, and grandchildren, are paying two-thirds of the cost—if we reduce that to 25 percent, which is the proposal of the President or the course which the President wishes to pursue and which the Senator from Massachusetts has so aggressively spoken here in behalf of, then what you are doing is you are essentially raising the taxes of working Americans of the children and the grandchildren of those seniors by an incredible amount of dollars—hundreds of millions of dollars. You are increasing the taxes on working Americans and increasing the obligation, the subsidy of working Americans, which goes to support seniors.

Now, I think the split of two-thirds/one-third—actually it is more than that—70 percent, approximately, 69 percent/30 percent is a pretty good effort made by working Americans, children of seniors and grandchildren of seniors to support the senior citizen population in this country.

I think most seniors would understand and recognize that the fact they are asked to pay 30 percent of the cost of their health insurance is a reasonable request. To reduce that to 25 percent is to skew the process to mean that their children and their grandchildren, who are trying to raise their families in these sometimes difficult economic times, who are trying to help their children go to school, who are trying to, maybe, buy their first home, maybe just make ends meet, to say we are going to raise the taxes on those people in order to further dramatically skew the process and subsidize the senior citizen population at an even higher level for their part B premium seems to me to be the height of pandering to one interest at the expense of another interest. Intergenerational pandering is what it amounts to, or extra-generational pandering.

The fact is, the differential between or the difference, the support that is now being paid by children and grandchildren of seniors, working children and grandchildren of seniors, of 69 percent of the cost of that seniors' health care insurance is a fair amount. To increase the tax on working Americans by another 6½ percent, which is what is being suggested in this proposal, is not fair.

Then there is the other issue here. We have heard a large amount of crocodile tears from the other side of the aisle about how the Republicans are helping the wealthy at the expense of the poor in our tax cuts. Of course, you might note—which is never noted by the other side of the aisle—that the President raised taxes by about $240 billion and said it was too much of a

tax increase just a few weeks ago. He raised taxes by $240 billion when he said he would not increase taxes during the first term in office, over a 5-year-period, and we are cutting taxes by $240 billion approximately over a 7-year period.

We are basically at a wash. We are getting back to the point that the President appears to want to be at now when he said he raised taxes, too. We are trying to correct that, getting taxes back to where they were when he came to office.

Independent of that we hear—the crocodile tears about it being horrible what is being done here to the poor and moderate income Americans by the Republican tax cut, and helping the wealthy—first, it is factually inaccurate. The tax cut that we are proposing, 70 percent of it flows to people, families with incomes under $75,000, and 90 percent of it flows to people with incomes under $100,000, and people with incomes up to $70,000 are not wealthy in this society.

More significantly, something that is conveniently ignored by the other side in the area of Medicare legislation and which the President appears ready to veto is the fact we are saying to the wealthy Americans who are seniors, ''Hey, you have to stop being subsidized by your working children and grandchildren.'' We do not think it is right that a working child and grandchild who is trying to raise a family should have to pay 69 percent of the cost of the insurance of the fellow who just retired from IBM last year and is making hundreds of thousands of dollars maybe—tens of thousands, anyway—in pension benefits.

It is not fair that a person who is working 40, 50, 60 hours a week trying to make ends meet on a computer assembly line in New Hampshire or at a farm in the Midwest or at some other activity—garage or a restaurant—that an individual, family, a husband and wife, working their hearts out trying to make ends meet should have to subsidize the top 100 people who retired from General Motors or Ford last year, whose incomes on pensions exceed the earnings of the people who are paying the taxes to subsidize their health benefits. It is just not right.

So, in the Republican plan, we say if you have more than $50,000 of individual income or as a husband and wife you have more than $75,000 of income, you have to start paying a higher percentage of the cost of your part B premium. Instead of being subsidized at 69 percent by the working Americans in this country, you are going to have to start to pay more. And if your income exceeds $100,000 as an individual or $150,000 as a husband and wife, then you have to pay the full cost of your part B premium. That is good policy. That is exactly what we should be doing. We should be making this more fair.

So, let us have a little integrity in the process here as we debate this issue. Let us note that, when the President says he wants to reduce the amount of the premium that seniors are paying, when he wants that 31 percent to go down to 25 percent, that is a tax increase on the people who pick up the difference, the people who pick up the cost for that tax cut to seniors. It is a tax increase on working children and grandchildren. Mr. President, 70 percent today, or 69 percent, of senior's premiums today are already subsidized and we have accepted that as a fair number. But to go to 75 percent, as the President wants, means you are going to raise the taxes on working Americans, the children and grandchildren of those seniors, by at least 6.5 percent, under the President's proposal. That is not right and it is not fair.

Let us remember also that wealthy Americans today are subsidized by working Americans who cannot afford it. It is time to change that and that is what the Republican proposal does.

As we continue this debate I think a little forthrightness on the facts would help the process.

I yield.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The time of the Senator has expired.

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to be able to proceed for 5 minutes as in morning business.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All Senators should be notified that the period for morning business has concluded, but the request of the Senator is in order. The Senator from Massachusetts is recognized.

THE INTEGRITY OF MEDICARE

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, my good friend and colleague from New Hampshire has basically not responded to the central thrust of our amendment, and that is the cuts which are being proposed by the Republican program, according to CBO, means that there will be $50 billion in premium increases and $24 billion in increases in deductibles. We are also talking about $245 billion in tax breaks for the wealthy individuals.

He failed to explain the connection, but the connection is there for everyone to see. The Democrats offered, under the leadership of TOM DASCHLE, the proposal which would guarantee the financial integrity of the Medicare system without a single dime increase for the premiums for those under Medicare and Social Security; not a single dime. Every Democrat voted for that and only one Republican voted for it. Every other Republican voted against it. It would have preserved the integrity of the Medicare system for the next 10 years.

But, nonetheless, the Republicans wanted to move the burden over to the payment of senior citizens, to collect the $50 billion—$51 billion, according to CBO. It is right there in the chart, $51 billion. It says, ''Increase in the premiums, $51 billion.'' It is there under your proposal. It is not there under ours. What is under yours is the tax breaks for wealthy individuals that is going right along with this proposal. That is the justification and the reason for this kind of cut. We can maintain the integrity of the Medicare system without having these kinds of increases. The only reason you need these kinds of increases is to have a tax cut.

So the American people have to say why should the major tax cut, that is being proposed by the Republicans, go to the wealthy individuals and corporations, and the premium increases are coming out of people who are going to rely on $5,300 or $7,800 or, at the top, $10,000 a year to survive?

So this, the increase in premiums for our seniors over this period of time, is $12,400 more in premiums over the 7 years. That is what the seniors are going to pay under the Republican proposal.

You can complain all you like about what your proposal is going to do, but you cannot argue with the CBO figures. If you have something better on it, then address it. And that kind of wholesale increase, tax increase, the wiping out of the COLA's, the increasing of the premiums and the deductibles by that amount in order to justify a tax break is something that I find is absolutely unacceptable and I think most Americans find unacceptable. Certainly the seniors would find that unacceptable.

To do it on a continuing resolution at this time without full discussion and debate, I think, is unjustified and unwarranted and unfair.

I yield the floor.

Mr. BRYAN addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak as in morning business for a period of time not to exceed 5 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The Senator from Nevada is recognized.

IMAGE-ENHANCING EFFORT AT DOE

Mr. BRYAN. Mr. President, those of us in public life are accustomed to being surprised as the morning newspaper is delivered to us each day to find extraordinary examples of bureaucratic abuse, waste, and misuse of the taxpayers' dollars. I must say, this morning the level of my outrage at this most recent abuse, which I will comment on in just a moment, has been unsurpassed in my recent memory.

As the Wall Street Journal reports this morning, the Secretary of the Department of Energy, Mrs. O'Leary, has